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AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

Fulfilled Prophecies of the Apocalypse,

FROM

THE FIRST SEAL,

TO

THE END OF CHAPTER XIX.

BY JAMES ARMSTRONG, A.M.,

CURATE OF ARDOYNE, DIOCESE OF LEIGHLIN.

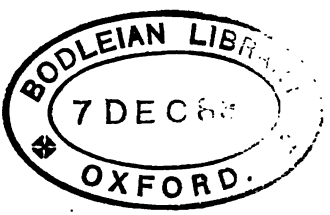
"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."—2 Pet., i. 19.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.

DUBLIN:
JAMES M'GLASHAN, 50, UPPER SACKVILLE-STREET.
LONDON: SEELEYS, FLEET-STREET.
1851.

PRICE SIX SHILLINGS.



DUBLIN:
PRINTED BY J. M. O'TOOLE,
13, HAWKINS'-STREET.

PREFACE.

THE Apocalypse has been always considered a most difficult and mysterious book. During the last two hundred years innumerable works have been written upon it, and many of them by men of the most distinguished learning and genius. But it does not appear to have been distinctly observed, or to have been kept steadily in view, that the Revelation requires *three* keys to open it; one of which is to be found in the Apocalypse itself; another in the prophecies of the Old Testament; and the third in history.

Now, as the first and second keys make known the scope of the prophecy, the mutual relation of its parts, the meaning of the enigmatic symbols, and the subject of many symbolic visions, they are so necessary to the Apocalyptic student, that, unless he hold them in his hands, and apply them constantly, the most piercing intellect and the best stored mind will endeavour in vain to penetrate and unfold the prophecy. Whereas, by steadily using them, any person who has assiduity and a competent knowledge of civil and ecclesiastical history, may understand so much of the prophecy as has been fulfilled, and explain it to all who take an interest in such inquiries.

Whether I have succeeded, is not for me to determine. But I may say, that I have pursued an independent course of study, and that by uniformly resorting to the Sacred keys, as well as to the historic, I have been led to results that are widely different from the views of every other commentator; in the division of the prophecy, in the relation of the parts to one another and to the whole, in the uniform signification of the symbols, in the scope of many symbolic visions, their time and order, and generally in the events by which they are fulfilled.

Induced by circumstances, which need not now be specified, I attempted, some years ago, to explain the seventeenth chapter of the Apocalypse; but I soon found it must be studied in connexion with many other visions. While engaged in these investigations I was gradually convinced that the Apocalypse, from the first seal to the end of chapter xix., is a great prophetic system, and that it can be understood only by being studied as a whole, and in connexion with the prophecies of the Old Testament. I was thus made to see the necessity of the uniform application of the Apocalyptic and prophetic keys, as well as of the historic.

I beg to direct particularly the reader's attention to the manner in which they have been used, and to the light that has thereby been thrown on visions that are, otherwise, so dark and inexplicable.

As the Apocalypse is a closely connected system, which ought to be viewed as a whole, and not in detached portions, I should have liked to publish the entire of my exposition at once, or at least to the end of chapter xii., where a very remarkable Apocalyptic and historic

period terminates. But I could not venture to incur the expense of a large book; so my exposition must end, for the present, with the fourth trumpet.

Of course it depends very much upon the reception of the first part, when the second shall appear. But I have a confident hope, that the reader will be satisfied with the soundness of the principles, and the fairness with which they are applied; and that he will feel, that no inconsiderable amount of information, not readily to be got elsewhere, has been communicated on the Apocalypse, on prophecy in general, and on some historical subjects of great interest.

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[1] The quotations, p. 105, from Milton and Shakspeare, were intended for a note.

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AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

FULFILLED PROPHECIES OF THE REVELATION.

CHAPTER I.

The Object of the Work—the Structure and Scope of the Apocalypse, from Chap. VI. to the end of Chap. XIX.—the Principles on which the Interpretation is conducted—the probable Time the Apocalypse was seen—The exact Knowledge of the Time when it was given not essential to the Right Interpretation.

THE object of this work is to give an exposition of the first six seals of the Apocalypse, the first six trumpets, and of those other Apocalyptic prophecies which appear to have been fulfilled, wholly or in part, before the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

These prophecies are contained in chapters vi., vii., viii., ix., x., xi., xii., xiii., xiv., xvii., and xix. They reach over a long period of time, and embrace the most important events which have happened during seventeen hundred years, within, and a little beyond the limits of the old Roman empire, viz:—the propagation of the Christian religion—the persecution of its professors by the Roman government—the civil wars and calamities of the empire—the fall of paganism—the establishment of Christianity—the rapid corruptions and divisions of the church—the invasion of the empire by the barbaric nations—the settlement of various Germanic tribes in the countries south of the Danube and Rhine, and their relation with the imperial government—the rise and progress of the Mahometan power—the Turks—the fall of the Greek empire—the general idolatry and depravity of the times before and after its fall—the preservation, in the midst of this general corruption, of many

sincere believers—the public testimony of others to the truth, and protest against the special errors of their day—their sufferings—the unhappy state of the nations during the period of their testimony—the death and resurrection of the witnesses—the dissolution of the old imperial government—the rise and establishment of a new ecclesiastico-civil power in Europe—the establishment of the papal sovereignty, and of the kingdoms which, receiving the laws and religion of the papacy, form with it a great ecclesiastical system—its dark, sanguinary, and persecuting character—the desolating European war, which, beginning at the end of the fifteenth century, continued, with little intermission, till the peace of Cambray, A.D. 1558—the Reformation—the influence of this war on the progress of the Reformation—the religious wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As an interpreter might readily lose his way in the mazes of a prophecy so vast and complicated, before we attempt to trace them, a few remarks shall be made to explain its structure and scope, and the principles on which the interpretation is conducted; for if these shall be ascertained and kept steadily in view, the expositor will be less likely to wander, and the reader will, at all times, be enabled to judge of the soundness and consistency of the exposition.

I. The Revelation, from chapter vi. to the end of chapter xix., contains a number of distinct but by no means independent predictions; for not one of them can be satisfactorily discussed without examining and comparing, perhaps every vision in this portion of the Book. For instance, as no explanation is given in the first seal of its symbols, the Apocalyptic inquirer is naturally led to study the vision in chap. xix., where the "white horse" is again introduced, in the hope that it may reflect some light on the seal. But, before the later prediction can be understood, its symbols; the "beast," the "earth," the "kings of the earth," the "image," &c., must be known. Hence he is compelled to consider attentively chapters xvii. xiii. xii., where the same, or like symbols occur; and, meeting here new images and unexplained terms—as "the bottomless pit," "the sea," &c., which are seen in previous visions, these are, in like manner, to be investigated. He is thus forced from one prophecy to another, until he finds himself at the first seal, the point from which he

has started. It is, therefore, apparent that this part of the Apocalypse is a prophetic system, having its accomplishment, not in independent events, but in a system, or systems of things.

II. Prophecy, in general, whether of the Old Testament or of the New, forms one great system—the Redemption of Man, and the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom, being the theme of all the prophets. The first Evangelical prediction, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel," contains the germ and substance of the whole prophetic volume. Subsequent revelations only prepare and fix the place, character, time, and other circumstances of this great contest. Now, although the Redeemer's sufferings were at an end, and the price of man's redemption[1] paid in full, when Jesus "bowed[2] his head and gave up the ghost," yet as Satan is still permitted to exert a fearful[3] power over individuals, multitudes, and nations, deceiving, seducing, blinding, terrifying, and making them the instruments of his will, thereby opposing and retarding the universal reception of the Gospel, the conflict is still going on, and is evidently the subject of the Apocalypse; for the agents[4] introduced in it are, on the one hand, the Lord and his armies, and, on the other, Satan[5] and his instruments, who make war with the Lamb, persecute the woman and the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus. "The business," therefore, "of the whole work is manifestly to pourtray the state of the religion and Church of Christ"[6].

And the angel who revealed the Apocalypse has told us that this is the object and scope of it. "See," says he to St. John,[7] who was about to worship him, "thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God; for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy": or, rather as it ought to be rendered in an inverted

[1] Coloss. ii. 14, 15; Heb. ii. 14, 15; Eph. i. 7.; Isaiah, liii. [2] John, xix. 30.
[3] Acts, v. 3; xiii. 10.; 1 Peter, v. 8. [4] Rev. i.; xix. 11, &c.
[5] Rev. ii. 13.; xii. 9, &c.; xvii. 14. [6] Davison on Prophecy, 461.
[7] Rev. xix. 10.; compare xxii. 9, Luke xxiv. 25, Acts iii. 18, 1 Peter, i. 10, 11. 2 Peter, ii. 19.

order, the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus.[1] The angel warns St. John not to worship him, because he is his fellow-servant; but he is a fellow-servant because, being a prophet, or having the spirit of prophecy, he is appointed to discharge a like office with the apostle, namely, to bear testimony to Jesus; for the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus. To bear witness to Jesus is, therefore, the end and object of all prophecy, and, consequently, of the Revelation in particular.

"The text," says Bishop Hurd, "is properly a key put into our hands, to open that dispensation (the nature and genius of prophecy) which had in view ultimately the person of Christ, and the various revolutions of his kingdom. The spirit of prophecy is universally the testimony of Jesus. . . . The text implies the fact that prophecy, in general (that is, all the prophecies of the Old and New Testament) hath its ultimate accomplishment in the history and dispensation of Jesus."[2]

III. The Apocalyptic prophecies are generally delivered in symbols, and often with such seeming ambiguity that it appears impossible to determine satisfactorily the place, the time, and the characters of the events predicted. For instance, on opening the first seal a victorious horseman is seen. If we consider this vision simply by itself, as it has been recorded by St. John, no notes are given to enable us to ascertain the specific character, the time, or place of the events represented. Victories are undoubtedly intended; but who is the conqueror?—what is the nature of his conquests?—are they temporal or spiritual? If it be asserted they are temporal, it may be asked, how do you know they are such?—where do you find their time and their place? If, on the other hand, it be alleged they are victories over sin and Satan, how is this to be decided?—for evidence, proof—not assertion, are required in a question of this kind.

In another vision an earthquake is seen. Is it a natural or a symbolical earthquake?—a convulsion in the kingdoms of this

[1] The Greek article being prefixed to testimony and spirit shows that the subject and predicate are equipollent, and the proposition may be converted simply. Compare "Sin is the transgression of the law"—1 John, iii. 4.

[2] Sermon on Prophecy, pp. 22-30.

world, or a convulsion of nature, such as we believe will take place at the general judgment?

Now, ambiguous, in appearance, as these and some other visions are, their scope is so far from being uncertain, that it is fixed beyond the possibility of doubt.

All prophecy must be fulfilled either before or after the Ascension of the Lord; and its ultimate object being the Lord Jesus, the predictions which have their accomplishment in the latter period, have their completion in his kingdom of grace or power. For, as the most eminent theologians observe, His kingdom is double. "A double kingdom," says Bishop Pearson, "there is of Christ: one of power, in which all are under him; another of proprietry, in those which belong unto him: none of us can be excepted from the first; and happy are we if, by our obedience, we show ourselves to have an interest in the second, for then that kingdom is not only Christ's but ours."[1]

And, in like manner, Bishop Butler, in his sermon for the propagation of the Gospel, adverts to the double dominion of the Lord—"The righteous government of the world must be carried on, and, of necessity, men shall remain the subjects of it, by being examples of its mercy or of its justice."

This double power of the Lord, to save and to destroy, is often and emphatically brought before us in the Old Testament and in the New, where it is not unfrequently represented by a single symbol, that of the stone; which is a "sure foundation"[2] and "sanctuary" to the believer; but "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence," which falls upon and grinds the disobedient to powder.

Now many of the prophecies, whose subject is the one or the other of these dispensations, are often interwoven with a single Apocalyptical vision. If, then, the time and the scope[3] of the

[1] Exposition of the Creed, Art. vi. p. 463.

[2] Isaiah, viii. 14; xxviii. 16; Daniel, ii. 34; 1 Peter, ii. 16; Romans, ix. 13; Matthew, xxi. 44. Compare Zech. ix. 9, and the second psalm: in the one prophecy he is the King who comes to the daughter of Zion, having salvation; in the other, he is the King who breaks those who take counsel against him with a rod of iron, and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

[3] A writer on prophecy (Bishop Warburton, I think) has observed that the interwoven prophecies determine the scope of the Apocalyptic, but I cannot recover the place.

interwoven prophecies can be determined, the scope and time of the visions with which they are combined will likewise be ascertained; for both sets of predictions coming from the same Author, being fulfilled in the same period of time, bearing testimony to the same Person, and being expressed in the same language or imagery, will necessarily have their accomplishment in the same events. This appears self-evident, and to arise inevitably from the nature of language and of prophecy. For, suppose a man of sense and integrity writing the history of a monarch who, by one series of actions, had delivered his people from a state of misery, and, by another, had crushed his and their malignant enemies, to appropriate, in one part of the book, certain terms and images to describe the king and each set of actions respectively, it cannot be imagined he would employ, in another portion of it, the same words and figures to denote different persons and things; much less that he would elaborately construct and insert in a very significant place a sentence, or several sentences, composed chiefly of these leading phrases and images, not one of them being applicable to the person or things they signify elsewhere.

Now apply this reasoning to the interpretation of prophecy. All prophecy is given by God, who has the past, the present, and the future alike before him, the whole of which forms one system, its various parts tending, as the radii of a circle, to a common centre. If, then, the imagery and terms of earlier predictions foretelling the propagation of the Gospel by the Lord, or the destruction of His enemies, be interwoven in obscure symbolic visions, which are revealed and are to be fulfilled in the latter or Gospel times, their object and end being ultimately the Lord and His kingdom, it is surely a plain intimation that so far as their language and imagery are the same, their scope and the events which fulfil them are the same: consequently if the time, place, or scope of either sets of predictions can be ascertained, the time, the place, or the scope of the others will likewise be determined. They are parallel passages of Scripture, and to be regarded as other texts, the language and imagery of which are the same.

The most eminent writers on prophecy have recognised the validity of this principle, and frequently resort to it in their

explanations; but, unhappily, it has not been steadily applied to the interpretation of the Apocalypse.

Bishop Horsley maintains that Noah's prophecy,[1] "He (Japhet) shall dwell in the tents of Shem," and Isaiah's,[2] "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitation," have their accomplishment in the same events, because the images presented to both prophets are the same.

Davison's vindication of the Evangelical prophecy, Zech. vi., "Behold the man whose name is the Branch," is based on the same principle.

Vitringa, the elder Lowth, and other expositors, do not hesitate to assert that part of Isaiah, xxxiv., and of the Revelation, xvii., refer to the same events, because the language and imagery of both prophecies are the same.

Bishop Lowth, on Isaiah, lxiii., says, (and herein he agrees with his father and other commentators)—"We need not be at a loss to determine the person who is here introduced as stained with treading the wine-press, if we consider how St. John has applied this image of the prophet, Rev. xix., 13, 15."

Nearly all expositors of the Apocalypse not only admit, but contend that no interpretation is admissible which does not make its ten-horned beast harmonize with the ten-horned beast of Daniel, vii. And it may be observed that a closer attention to the symbolic representation of the earlier prophet, would have greatly facilitated the exposition of St. John's vision.

IV. The style of the Apocalypse is symbolic, its predictions being generally given and recorded in symbols instead of words.

The method of communicating information by substituting things and representative actions for written or spoken language, was familiar to all the nations of antiquity, both in the east and in the west. A few examples of this very general usage shall be given.

The story of the Tarquins is familiar to all. Not being able to reduce Gabii by force, they determined to do it by fraud: Sextus, therefore, as a preliminary step, undertook to gain the confidence of the people, and having succeeded, he sent to ask

[1] Genesis, ix. 27. [2] Isaiah, liv. 2.

his father what he should do next? The old king answered, without writing or uttering a single word, by striking, as he walked in his garden with the messenger, the heads from the tallest poppies.

"The jurisprudence of the Romans," says Gibbon, "exhibited the scenes of a pantomime; the words were adapted to the gestures, and the slightest error or neglect in the forms of proceeding was sufficient to annul the substance of the fairest claims."[1]

"Idanathura,[2] a king of the Scythians, when ready to oppose Darius, who had passed the Ister, sent the Persian a symbol instead of a letter, namely, a mouse, a frog, a bird, a dart, and a plough."

The Caliph Ali,[3] being urged by his brother Okail to augment his pension, went into his house, returned with a piece of red hot iron, and desired Okail to hold it in his hands. The latter naturally refused. "If," said Ali, "you cannot endure the heat produced by man, how can you expect me to expose myself to the fire God will kindle."

"In the beginning of the sixty-third year of the Hegira,"[4] says Ockley, "the Medinians broke out into open rebellion against Yezid, after the following manner:—Gathering together in their mosque, round about the pulpit, one of them said, 'I lay aside Yezid as I lay aside this turban,' throwing, with these words, his turban on the ground. Another said—'I put away Yezid as I put away this shoe.' This example was followed by others, till there was a great heap of shoes and turbans."

No one, then, need be surprised to find representative actions and symbols in every part of the scriptures; for symbolic language was the idiom of the times, peculiarly congenial to the genius of the people of the east: besides, it admits of an early translation into every language, and, by its brevity and enigmatic character, is admirably fitted to be the vehicle and record of prophecy.

The sacred symbols are of two kinds; the one obvious and easy to be understood, the other is of a more abstruse and enigmatic character. As the Apocalyptic predictions are generally

[1] Decline and Fall, xlv. vol. v. 344. [2] Divine Leg. book v. sec. iv.
[3] Ockley, History of the Saracens. Note from Price. Ed. Bohn, p. 326.
[4] Ib. p. 425.

conveyed in the latter, it is essentially requisite to a satisfactory interpretation that they should be explained consistently and with precision: for guesses ought not to be admitted, and they are happily unnecessary; there being scarcely a symbol in the Apocalypse which is not interpreted in some part of the Bible. The symbolic language of the Revelation is, therefore, authoritatively fixed, and may be understood by every person who will read his Bible attentively.

V. Prophecy consists of two parts, the moral and the predictive; the predictive, with which we have to do, must be interpreted by the historical events which fulfil it, not by the opinions and guesses of an expositor. This seems evident. For prophecy, which foretells a series and combination of future events, is, in general, delivered enigmatically, and with great brevity. If, therefore, these predictions had been intended to be understood before their accomplishment, they would have been given more fully, and not in allegories and symbols. For the parabolic style being highly figurative, admitting two different senses, and being capable of representing a long series of things with great brevity, is manifestly adapted, and appears formed to conceal.

For example, Nebuchadnezzar[1] saw in a dream an image of gold, silver, brass, iron, and clay; if he had recollected and known the dream to be a prophecy, it cannot be imagined, the interpretation would, therefore, have been known. And if an inspired interpreter had not been sent to show that the image represented four successive monarchies—the first, the head of gold being the Babylonian, it cannot be supposed another would have been more successful; or that the vision could have been understood, until events, by fulfilling, had explained it.

Nor will the obstacles to an interpretation be removed, even though the general signification of the symbols be ascertained.

Daniel[2] sees four wild beasts come up from the sea, diverse one from another; the fourth beast having ten horns and a little horn. Now, although the beasts were known to represent four great empires, and the ten horns, ten kingdoms, into which the last monarchy was to be divided, and the little horn another

[1] Daniel, ii. [2] vii.

another king or kingdom; yet, who, when the prophecy was given, or shortly after, could have undertaken to explain the series of things predicted? For how could he have determined the time, place, and nature of the kingdoms? But if, in the lapse of ages, four great successive monarchies be found in the history of the world, if the last be divided into ten, if another gradually grew up in the midst of them, acquired great power, and persecuted incessantly the saints of the Most High:—a person living in the present day, nearly 2,500 years after the prophecy was given, and possessed of a competent knowledge of civil and ecclesiastical history, could understand so much of the prediction as has been fulfilled, and explain it to another. But no knowledge of history, and of the prophetic idiom, can qualify him to understand and interpret the part of the vision which remains yet to be accomplished: just as no amount of learning and genius could have enabled the man, who lived two thousand four hundred years ago, to solve the enigma of the fourth beast and the eleven horns. The place, the time, the specific things represented, would be shrouded in impenetrable obscurity, till God, by bringing the events to pass, which accomplished the vision, had dissipated the darkness in which it had been enveloped.

There is an obvious reason for involving prophecy in this deep obscurity; for if we could open and read unfulfilled, as well as fulfilled predictions, the future no less than the past would be known—the "times and the seasons which [1]the Father hath put in his own power."

Hence prophecy is represented in Scripture, as a "[2]light shining in a dark place," and a [3]sealed book, which no one in heaven or in earth can open but the Lord.[4]

VI. The place and time of the events are predicted in, and are, therefore, a part of the prophecy.[5]

[1] Acts, i., 8. [2] 2 Peter, i., 19. [3] Revelation, v., 3–6.

[4] Sir Isaac Newton well observes:—"The folly of interpreters has been to foretell times and things by this prophecy (the Apocalypse), as if God designed to make them prophets. God gave this, and the other prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities, by enabling them to foreknow things; but that, after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event; and his own providence not the interpreter's, be manifested thereby to the world." See note A, at the end.

[5] "The entire subject of this book is strongly marked by a system of chronological

VII. Hence, as Bishop Hurd has observed,[1] "The order of the events and the visions is not the same, the true order of the events is to be sought in certain characters, not fancied at pleasure, but inserted in the visions themselves."

That such should be the order of the prophecy will appear, from the following considerations, to be the necessary consequence of the comprehensiveness and diversity of its contents, and symbolic structure. For, suppose the Roman empire to be the theatre of the events predicted—that the Christian religion is published—that its professors are cruelly persecuted by the Roman government—that the empire is visited by a long series of calamities—that there is a great conflict between the pagan persecutors and the friends of truth—that heathen Romanism is crushed—that Christianity is raised from the dust to the throne—that the church, lifted by the wings of imperial authority receives a vast accession of converts—that she becomes rapidly corrupted—that many earnestly protest against her corruptions—that they are fiercely persecuted—that civil wars break out—that the barbaric nations which lie beyond the empire, are, at the same time, violently agitated, and driven in on its provinces, passing and re-passing over them, like the waves of the sea—that many of these nations settle in her territories—enter into alliances with or submit to its chief—that the whole of this system is dissolved, and with it all civil central government—that the seat of the dominion of the old effete power is immediately occupied by another, so like it in aspirations and extent of sway, that it may be represented by symbols almost exactly the same—that, during these many centuries of strife and confusion, new ecclesiastical powers gradually spring up, and exercise a terrible tyranny over the people who have fostered them—that religion is more and more corrupted—that the open professors and supporters of pure Christianity are persecuted and hunted by wild beasts in the shape of men. Suppose it to be the design of prophecy to represent, in symbol, these various, discordant, complicated, and partly coincident events, they

order. Subsequent and coincident periods of time are noted; and the course and succession is made a part of the prophecy, as well as the events themselves."—Davison on Prophecy, p. 461.

[1] Sermon on Prophecy.

would be described not only by appropriate images, but also, most probably, in distinct visions; and these visions being set down in a book, and not painted on a table, will necessarily be recorded in succession; and the historic facts, not the visions which predict the facts, will be the order of the prophecy.

The Apocalypse, then, foretells events of a specific character, their place and time, their succession, coincidence, and relation to one another, and to the whole.

VIII. It is impossible to determine, with certainty, the time when the Apocalypse was given. Sir Isaac Newton, Bishops Warburton and Newton, with some commentators of less note, maintain it was seen in the reign of Nero, and Grotius, in that of Claudius; while other writers of a deservedly high reputation, refer it to the reign of Domitian. We do not propose to investigate the question; because, though one of considerable interest, the determination, were it possible, does not seem necessary to understand the parts of the prophecy which have been already fulfilled. And herein most interpreters are agreed; for they usually consider the first seal to represent the propagation of the Gospel, whether the later or the earlier date is followed.

An objection has, however, been made to this application of the first seal, and it ought to be noticed. The Christian religion, it is said, having been extensively published, before the Apocalypse was revealed (whether in the reign of Nero or of Domitian), the seal cannot have its accomplishment in the propagation of Christianity; for this would be to make it a prophecy after the event.

If this reasoning were conclusive against the Evangelical application of the seal, it would prove too much for those who use it. Every interpreter, whose work I have examined, understands the fifth seal to have its accomplishment in the persecution of the Christians. Yet the Jews, the pagan multitude, and the Roman government had fiercely persecuted them, before the Apocalypse was given; whether its assumed date be the reign of Nero or Domitian. The objection would be weighty in the discussion of isolated and independent predictions, which are fulfilled by a single event, or events that happen in a short space of time, but it can have no force in the present instance, by reason of the peculiar structure and unity of the Revelation, the

complexity and vastness of its contents. For the predictions foretelling the most important revolutions which have happened (or probably shall happen), within and a little beyond the limits of the old Roman empire, form a great prophetic system; the component parts of which have a mutual relation and dependence on one another, earlier predictions preparing the later and subsequent visions reflecting light on the foregoing. Nor is this all: inasmuch as they not only abound in the imagery and symbolic language of the Old Testament, but are often framed so to harmonise with, to elucidate, and be elucidated by, earlier prophecies, that expositors are constrained to study both, before either can be understood and satisfactorily explained. The Apocalypse, then, being so complex and so artfully constructed, and the complement, as it were, of many previous revelations, even if it could be proved (which I greatly doubt), against Bishops Newton and Warburton, Grotius and Sir Isaac Newton, to have been seen in Domitian's reign, the interpretation, which refers the commencing series of a great chain of events, to an earlier date, would not be thereby invalidated.

This, which appears evident, is amply sustained by the analogy of another great historical prophecy. Daniel[1] saw four wild beasts rising out of the sea; the symbols respectively of the four great empires of Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Babylon is represented by a lion with wings, which the prophet sees until they were plucked. Now the greater part of the prophecy regarding the first empire was accomplished at the time of the vision; for Babylon, which had long passed the summit of its power, was then hastening rapidly and manifestly to its fall.

"The eagle's wings," says Bishop Newton,[2] "denote its swiftness and rapidity; and the conquests of Babylon were very rapid, that empire being advanced to the height within a few years by a single person—by the conduct and arms of Nebuchadnezzar." And the plucking of the wings, or the wings being plucked, according to the same interpreter, and others, represent the weakening and the subversion of the monarchy.

The bishop says, the "wings were beginning to be plucked on the delivery of this prophecy; for at this time the Medes

[1] Daniel, vii., 2. [2] Diss. xiv. p. 225.

and Persians were encroaching upon it. . . . Seventeen years afterwards the kingdom was transferred to the Medes."

Indeed the wings were not only beginning to be plucked when Daniel saw the vision, but their plucking was nearly finished. The prophecy was given, according to Archbishop Ussher,[1] 555 years before the Christian era; in the succeeding year (556) Cyrus and Cyaxares had defeated the Babylonians and their allies in a great battle, wherein the king of Babylon was slain. The Hyrcanians revolted immediately from the Babylonians, joined the victors, and turned their arms against their old confederates, thereby enabling Cyrus to follow up his victory without delay, to overtake and defeat the Babylonians in a second great battle.[2]

To recapitulate: The enigmatic symbols are to be understood in the sense Scripture or usage has assigned to them. The scope of the Apocalyptic visions is to be determined by the prophecies from which the symbols and imagery are taken—the events represented are to be found in the history of the countries at the time, and in the order indicated by the prophecy, and all must have a direct reference to the Lord and His kingdom.

These are great checks on an arbitrary and capricious interpretation. They appear to be so many and important as to preclude the possibility of the interpreter, who observes them, deviating widely from the true interpretation; and they offer to the intelligent reader, a test by which its consistency and solidity may, at all times, be tried with satisfaction and profit to himself.

[1] Ussher, Ann. p. 139.

[2] Let no one, however, imagine there was no divine inspiration because Babylon was then on the verge of ruin, and it was apparent that the Medes and Persians would attain to the dominion of the East; for there are other particulars in the prophecy far beyond the reach of human sagacity. It foretells the subversion of the Persian empire by the Greeks, who were to be overthrown and succeeded by a fourth empire, which would be diverse from the preceding kingdoms, and divided into ten kingdoms, in the midst of which a little horn would rise, have great power, speak great words against the Most High, and wear out the saints of the Most High. Besides Daniel had foretold the fall of Babylon sixty years before, when it was at the summit of its power, and the same succession of empires. Jeremiah had likewise foretold its fall, and the people who would destroy it—li. 27, 28. Isaiah also, xiii., xiv., foretold its greatness and ruin, when Babylon was not yet formidable; and its subversion by the Medes, who were then scarcely known in the East: and he even names the individual who was to effect it; xliv. 28, xlv. 1.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST SEAL.

The White Horse and Rider—the Bow—the Crown—the Conquests.

"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard as it were the voice of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, come and see. And I saw and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him; and he went forth conquering and to conquer."

This seal must be compared with the prophecies in which the same symbols are found, before its subject can be satisfactorily determined; for, considered by itself, and without reference to these predictions, it contains no note by which the conqueror can be known, the time, place, or character of his victories.

The symbols are the "white horse and rider," the "bow," and "the crown." The "white horse" and a victorious leader sitting upon him is seen a second time in the vision—chapter xix.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns, and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself: and he was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood; and his name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he had on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And I saw an angel standing in the sun: and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of

heaven, Come and gather yourselves to the supper of the great God, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet, that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast into the lake of fire, burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse, which sword proceedeth out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh." As in the second vision the rider of the white horse is the Lord Jesus, the horseman in the first seal likewise represents Him: because there is no reason to suppose that the symbol which is given to the Lord in one part of the prophecy, would, in another part of of it, be transferred to an inferior person or power.

The Lord is introduced twice in the Apocalypse as a Conqueror, for He has a double kingdom; in both visions there is the common symbol of the "white horse," that the Conqueror in each may be known to be the Same; but as the victories which He obtains in His kingdom of grace and power are totally different, the other symbols are wholly unlike. Now, the subject of chapter xix., 11, &c., being manifestly the destruction of those obstinate enemies who fight against Him, the seal represents His victories of grace and salvation: the prophecy, therefore, foretells the successful propagation of the Gospel. And it began to be fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost descended on the apostles, and will have its final completion, when "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ."[1] This interpretation is confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which the same symbols are found.

The nine first verses of the forty-fifth psalm, describing the victories of a king, who is also a horseman and an archer, are

[1] Revelation, xi., 15.

evidently and confessedly a symbolic prophecy of the Lord Jesus going forth to propagate the Gospel. The King whose majesty and victories are celebrated, is thus addressed in verses 6, 7: "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness; therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." Now, as the King has "fellows," and is, nevertheless, "God," the Lord Jesus Christ is clearly the subject of this part of the prophecy; because, He alone, by the union of two distinct natures, the Godhead and the Manhood, in one Person, can be addressed as God, and yet, as one who has fellows.

This exposition is confirmed by the first chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the psalm is cited to prove that, according to the Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah is God as well as man.

The means—"truth, meekness and righteousness"—whereby the King achieves His victories, prove them to be the spiritual victories of the Gospel, and exclude, absolutely, conquests of every other kind. "Thou art fairer," says the psalmist to Him, "than the children of men; grace is poured into thy lips. . . In thy majesty ride prosperously, because of truth, meekness, and righteousness. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee." "Grace and truth," which "came by Jesus Christ," are the peculiar characteristics of the Gospel,[1] and cannot be attributed to any other event or dispensation whatever. Indeed the whole language and imagery of the psalm are so plainly Evangelical, that both the earlier and later commentators very generally agree in their explanation of it.

The translators of the authorized version of the Bible give this brief and excellent summary of the first nine verses—"The majesty and grace of Christ's kingdom."

The early Christian expositors give a like exposition of it. Augustine on the verse,—Thine arrows are sharp in the hearts of the King's enemies, whereby the people fall under thee, says, "the people fall when they fall in heart. There they lift themselves up against Christ; there they fall before Christ. Saul

[1] John, i. 17; Luke, iv. 22; Heb. iv. 16.

blasphemed Christ—he was lifted up; he supplicated Christ—he fell. An arrow is shot from heaven—Saul is pierced to the heart."

Bishop Horsley[1] in his exposition of the psalm, writes: "The Lord is represented in the Revelation as going forth upon a white horse, with a crown upon his head, conquering and to conquer. . . . The psalmist, in imagery almost the same, accosts him as a warlike prince preparing to take the field. . . Under images taken from military exploits the successful propagation of the Gospel is described. The war in which the Saviour is engaged is very different from the wars which the princes of this world wage upon one another: it is not for the destruction of the lives of men, but for the preservation of their souls."

THE BOW.

The bow which is implied in the forty-fifth psalm, is expressly given to the Lord in the remarkable symbolical prophecy of Zechariah:[2] "When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man." The nature of this war has been latterly disputed, but the context requires it to be understood, with the early Christians, spiritually.

Verses 9, 10, 11, and 12, with which the 13th is closely connected, are unquestionably a Gospel prophecy. In the 9th verse the Lord enters Jerusalem in lowly triumph, riding on an ass, and having salvation; in the 10th verse the implements of war are cut to pieces, and His dominions are extended from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth; in the 11th, the prisoners are sent forth out of the pit wherein is no water, by the Blood of the Covenant: that is, by the death of Christ as the sacrifice for sin;[3] in the 12th verse, the prisoners of hope—that is, those[4] who are enslaved to sin, and sigh in vain for deliverance—are exhorted to turn to the stronghold, (Zion's King who has salvation) and they shall receive double; the 13th verse describes a war: the question is what is its nature? Is it a war carried on by physical force, in which men fall by mutual acts of rage and violence? or, the war which the Lord wages by

[1] Sermons, pp. 62, 63. [2] Chapter ix. 13. [3] Heb. xiii. 20.
[4] Isaiah, xlii. 7; xlix. 9; lxi. 1; Rom. viii. 21.

the power of His grace against sin and Satan, for the preservation of the souls of men; and which is so often described in the prophecies by images taken from military deeds?

In the Hebrew, in the Greek, in the Latin, and in our authorized English version, verses 12 and 13 are so pointed as to make one sentence; and it is difficult to imagine they can form two; or that two subjects so very dissimilar as deliverance by the blood of Christ and armed violence should be joined together, so as to form two clauses of one sentence.

Let, however, the war be, as some will have it, the wars of the Maccabees against the successors of Alexander, and what is the connexion? The prisoners of hope (in other parts of Scripture those who labour under a sense of sin) are exhorted to turn to the stronghold and they shall receive double, when the Lord has bent Judah to him, and filled the bow with Ephraim; or, expressed without the symbol, when the Maccabees have defeated the Greeks, the oppressors and enemies of the Jews. Now what relation, in respect of time, have these Jewish victories with the deliverance offered in the preceding verses both to Jew and to Gentile? The day of these exploits was long before any one could turn to the stronghold and find deliverance by the Blood of the Covenant. And it is needless to observe that the achievements of the most warlike leader, engaged in the defence of the most righteous cause, cannot give the man, who knows the plague of his own heart, one jot of hope, that he shall be freed from the load that oppresses him, when the enemies of his country have been defeated and subdued.

But let the war symbolically represent the propagation of the Gospel by the Lord sending forth His missionaries with irresistible force, to publish salvation to mankind through the Blood of the Covenant, and the reasoning is clear and consecutive. The Saviour is announced, and deliverance promised by His Blood; the slave of sin, who is made to grind in its dark prison-house, is exhorted to turn to the stronghold, Zion's King, who has salvation, and he shall obtain the deliverance for which his soul craves; when the Lord has bent his bow, or, without the symbol, sent forth his missionaries to proclaim to a guilty world that a ransom has been found—that all who are near at

hand and afar off may have reconciliation and peace through the Blood of Christ.

Or, as the Hebrew[1] word translated "when" signifies "since," "for," or "because," as well as "when," the passage might be translated thus: "Turn ye to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope; for I have bent Judah to me, and filled the bow with Ephraim," &c.; or, without the symbol, the Lord has prepared and sent forth his missionaries, like arrows from the bow, to publish the glad tidings of salvation to Jew and to Gentile; all, therefore, who are oppressed by sin and guilt may turn to the Deliverer, and find rest for his soul.

There is, however, little difference in the meaning; the one indicates the time when, the other the reason why, the prisoners of hope may turn to the stronghold; the Blood whereby redemption is effected has been shed, and this has been published to the world.

The ancient and very many modern interpreters understand the prophecy spiritually. Scott says, "Some have understood it to refer to the time of the Maccabees. Others, however, interpret this passage (and he agrees with them) of the apostles and preachers of the Gospel in the primitive ages; they were prepared for their work as the Lord's bow and arrows," &c.

Jerome says, the interpretation which refers the prophecy to the Maccabees is a Jewish gloss. He understands it to be a Gospel prophecy. "The sons of the Church," says he, "whom the Lord raising up, these masters of opposing dogmas, the sayings of the philosophers, and the reasoning of the Gentiles, shall be destroyed."[2]

[1] "Ki" is rendered by "for" in the subsequent part of the prophecy, in the authorized version, and so in the Septuagint, and "quoniam" in the Latin.

[2] Jerome compares the latter part of it, "and made thee as the sword of a mighty man," with Zephaniah, ii., 12, "Ye Æthiopians, ye also shall be slain with my sword."

Vitringa, on the first Apocalyptic seal, understands the war to be spiritual. Henry, on Zechariah, says, "The preachers of the Gospel were the bow in Christ's hand, with which he went forth conquering and to conquer." Expositors in Poole's Synopsis understand it in the same manner, "Utar opera Judæ et Ephraim, id est, apostolorum . . . . in expugnandis Gentilibus, non quidem armis, sed gladio verbi, id est in eis convertendis."

A CROWN WAS GIVEN TO HIM.

A crown is the subject of many very remarkable prophecies. God[1] gave the crown of Israel to David and Solomon, and promised, if they and their children would take heed to their way and walk before Him in truth with all their heart, "there should not fail" them "a man on the throne of Israel." But their children who succeeded them in the kingdom, generally disobeyed the Law, and as they persisted in their disobedience, in spite of repeated threatenings and warnings, the grant of the crown was at last revoked, and the prophet Ezekiel[2] commanded to pronounce, in the following terms, the sentence of deprivation on Zedekiah:—"Thou profane, wicked prince, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end. Thus saith the Lord, Remove the diadem and take off the crown; this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it to him."

Writers[3] on prophecy are generally agreed that this taking off the crown from Zedekiah is the public revocation of the regal dignity promised to David and his children; and that he for whom it is reserved, whose right it is, and to whom it will be given, is the Messiah.

There can be no doubt this is the true interpretation. Zedekiah was not only the last of David's descendants, but the last king who sat on the throne of Israel, until the regal dignity was restored to that family in the Person of the Messiah. And the crown, which was removed and laid up to be given to Him whose right it is, could belong to no one but the Messiah.

The form of government established in Israel was a theocracy, the Lord being the Supreme Magistrate of the Jewish people, as well as their God. It was the peculiar characteristic of this constitution that no change could be made in any part of it without the express sanction and direction of Jehovah. Hence,

[1] 1 Samuel, vii. 12; 1 Kings, ii. 4; ix. 4; 1 Chronicles, xxviii. 7.

[2] Ezekiel, xxi. 25, 27.

[3] Jerome says, "Illi cui repostum erat, et qui fuit expectatio Gentium"—It has been given to Him for whom it was laid up, and who was the Desire of the Gentiles. And so Lowth and others.

when the Israelites desired a king,[1] that they might be like the other nations of the earth, they entreated the prophet Samuel to appoint him, instead of proceeding themselves to an election. Saul[2] was then made king, but by the express command of God. And when he neglected or violated the established laws of the kingdom, the crown was transferred, directly, by the same divine authority, from him and his family, to the house of Jesse[3] and to the youngest of Jesse's sons. In like[4] manner, Solomon was invested, by the command of God, with the regal dignity, to the exclusion of his elder brothers, who otherwise would have seemed to have had a prior claim. The kings of Israel, therefore, were only viceroys, appointed to govern under the King, according to the laws which He had made, having no authority, either individually or jointly with the people, to change any part of the written law. He, therefore, whose right the crown is, and to whom it is given, can be no other than the Messiah, who is so often called in the Scriptures Zion's King.

This will be further confirmed and elucidated by considering Ezekiel's prophecy of the crown in connexion with a symbolical one of Zechariah on the same subject. The prophecy which takes away the crown was delivered a short time before the burning of Jerusalem, and the carrying away of its inhabitants to Babylon. And as soon as the Jews return from the captivity the crown becomes again the subject of prophecy. "Take,"[5] says the Lord to Zechariah, "silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them on the head of Josedech, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, thus speaketh the Lord of Hosts, saying, Behold the man, whose name is the Branch; and He shall grow up out of His place; and He shall build the temple of the Lord: even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

This is a symbolical prophecy of the Lord; for its "characteristic signature," the Branch, precludes the application of it to

[1] 1 Samuel, viii. [2] 1 Samuel, ix.; xv. [3] 1 Samuel, xvi.
[4] 1 Chronicles, xxii. 9, 10. [5] Zechariah, vi. 12, 13.

another. Besides, he who is crowned, builds the house of the Lord, is a king and a priest, uniting between the throne and priesthood the counsel of peace: but Jesus only does these things; builds the house, bears the glory, and unites in His own Person the office of priest and king: thereby causing mercy and truth to meet together; righteousness and peace to kiss each other.

Accordingly, we find that the Lord Jesus claimed during His ministry, and exercised after His ascension, the sovereignty in its most fundamental points. While on earth He declared Himself to be greater than the temple, and Lord even of the Sabbath-day;[1] and shortly after his ascension He[2] abrogated the ceremonial law, and opened the kingdom to all who would repent, believe, and be baptized. And St. Paul, almost in the language and in the imagery of the Apocalypse, says, "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with honour and glory."[3]

HE WENT FORTH CONQUERING AND TO (THAT HE MIGHT) CONQUER.

This intimates a continued course of conquest; each victory preparing the way for new ones.

The propagation of the Gospel, which is the subject of this part of the seal, is popularly ascribed to the apostles, and in the same way, it is called the victory of the church; but in the prophecies and in the other parts of the Scripture, the Lord is the agent, and the missionaries are instruments in his hands. In the symbolical prophecies which have been cited to illustrate the seal, the Lord is the archer, Judah, Ephraim, and the sons of Zion, His bow and arrows. And so, in other prophecies, the whole work of bringing forth judgment to the Gentiles, and setting truth in the earth, is ascribed to Him. Thus in Isaiah: "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. . . . He shall bring forth judgment unto truth; He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth."[4]

[1] Matthew, xii. 6, 8. [2] Acts, x.
[3] Hebrews, ii. 2, εστεφανωμενον. στεφανος, Revelation, vi.
[4] Isaiah, xlii., 1–7, compare ii., 4, Zep. iii., 9.

Let us now briefly review the means by which this great work was effected. The Lord, before He ascended into heaven, said to His disciples: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world."

Here is a distinct promise from the Lord[1] of being always present with the apostles, in their missionary labours, and with all who should be lawfully called to perform the same work. For the promise of a continued presence, even to the end of the world, necessarily implies a succession of men, and shews that it is not to be restricted to the apostles, who were soon to pass from this scene of trial and of labour. But both the promise and the prophecy will be best illustrated by considering somewhat in detail the account, which has been left us, of the Lord's dealings with St. Paul.

I. St. Paul was converted by the Lord: "And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus; and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest. . . . And he trembling and astonished, said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou shalt do!"[2]

II. The Lord himself revealed the Christian religion to St. Paul, and prepared and appointed him to be an apostle. The facts are thus stated in the Epistle to the Galatians:[3] "Paul, an apostle not of men, neither by men, but by Jesus Christ. . . . I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me, is not after man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."

III. The apostle was appointed to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles especially, but it was not left to himself to determine and select the scene of his missionary labours; for he is often

[1] Matthew, xxviii., 19, 20. [2] Acts, ix., 3, &c.
[3] Gal., i., 1. 12, compare verses 17, &c., c. ii., v. 6–8, &c., 2 Cor., xii., 11.

prohibited from preaching in one country, commanded to proceed to another, to remain in this, or to depart from that city, in order that he may be sent to a third.[1] Thus, for example, the Lord commands him to leave Jerusalem, saying, "I will send thee far hence to the Gentiles. . . . for as thou hast testified of Me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome."[2]

IV. The Lord not only sends His missionaries to particular countries, but He also prepares the way, by disposing the people to hear them. "And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened that she attended unto the things that were spoken of Paul."[3]

V. The Lord was with the apostle to support and encourage him in all his difficulties. "Then[4] spake the Lord to Paul in the night, by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. . . . And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, be of good cheer, Paul."[5]

Two historical testimonies, the one of a Sacred writer, the other of a heathen, will remind the reader of the extent and rapidity of these spiritual conquests.

The Sacred writer says—"This was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. And many that believed came, and confessed and shewed their deeds. Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed. . . . And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver

[1] Acts, xvi. 9, 10; xviii. 9, 10; xxii. 18; Gal. ii. 2.
[2] Acts, xxiii. 11. [3] Acts, xvi. 14. [4] Acts, xviii. 9, 10.
[5] Acts, xxiii. 11. For miracles, compare Acts, xix. 11, xiv. 3; Mark, xvi. 20.

shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together, with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands: so that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. And when they heard these sayings they were full of wrath," &c.[1]

Pliny went into Bithynia, as Trajan's lieutenant, about the year 106 or 107; as soon as he had reached that province he found Christianity prevailing everywhere throughout his jurisdiction, and heathenism nearly ruined. His position being difficult and embarrassing, he wrote an official despatch to inform the emperor of the state of affairs, the steps he had taken to check the evil, and to ask for advice to guide him in his future proceedings. In this official letter, which is still extant, he distinctly alleges that Christianity had extended itself so widely in the cities, towns, and open country, that the temples were almost entirely forsaken (prope etiam desolata templa), that the sacred solemnities had been long discontinued (sacra solemnia diu intermissa), that scarcely a purchaser could be got for a victim[2] (rarissimus).

It will be recollected that the end and object of the Revelation is to bear testimony to Jesus and His kingdom.

To recapitulate: when the first seal is opened, a horseman is

[1] Acts, xix. 17, &c. "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also,"—Ib. xvii.

[2] It was the opinion of the heathens that their gods fed on the victims. (Deut. xxxii. 38.) They were now, according to the prophecy, beginning to be *famished*. "The Lord will be terrible unto them: for He will famish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship Him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen."—Zeph. ii., 11. Three things are foretold in this brief prophecy. First—The fall of the Jewish polity. For, it was an essential part of it that all the worshippers of God should repair three times every year to Jerusalem, or to the place where God had put His name. But according to the prophecy, the time would come when every one would worship Him from his place. Second—The fall of heathenism: for the gods would be famished. Third—The propagation of the Christian religion; for men shall worship Him, every one from his place.

seen sitting on a white horse, to whom a crown is given, and who goes forth conquering and to conquer:—the King must be the Lord Jesus, not only because the object of the prophecy is to bear witness to Him, but because He is introduced in another part of it riding on a white horse[1]—and as His kingdom is double,[2] the latter prediction foretelling the destruction of His obstinate enemies, the seal has its accomplishment in the propagation of the Gospel:—this interpretation is confirmed by the prophecies of the Old Testament, in which the symbols of a horseman, a crown, and a bow are found:—for in prophecies clearly Evangelical the Lord is represented as receiving a crown, riding forth as an Archer, King, and Conqueror, to propagate the Gospel, and as sending forth His missionaries, by bending Judah to Him and filling the bow with Ephraim:—corresponding to these symbolical representations, combined in the seal, we find that the propagation of the Gospel is ascribed to Him in the Sacred History—that the apostles and other missionaries were only instruments in His hands—and that the Christian religion, preached by a few fishermen, and opposed by all the powers of the world, spread everywhere with irresistible rapidity.

[1] See ante, page 6. [2] See ante, page 5.

CHAPTER III.

THE REVELATION, CHAPTER XIX. 11, ETC.

The Earth—the Kings of the Earth—the Beast—his proper Kingdom—his Twofold State—the Time of the Symbolical War, and when it begins.

THE successful propagation of the Christian religion has been shown to be the subject of the first seal—great numbers, on the Gospel being preached, repenting of their sins, renouncing their superstitions, believing on the Lord Jesus, and becoming heirs of salvation. But, though many believed, a large majority of the inhabitants of the countries, which are the principal theatre of the Apocalyptic prophecies, either rejected or corrupted Christianity, and often persecuted, with savage ferocity, all who embraced and maintained the Gospel, as it had been preached and delivered by the apostles.

The cause of this hatred (besides man's natural enmity to the truth) of a religion so reasonable, pure, and holy, offering peace and salvation to every one who will receive it, and sustained and enforced by the clearest and most irrefragable evidence, is to be traced to the state of society which has prevailed amongst these nations since the publication of Christianity. For their opinions, their private, social, and public relations, their forms of religion, their laws and government, having sprung from and being thoroughly interwoven with, paganism, or a paganized Christianity, all classes in the community, the populace, the priest, the philosopher, the noble, and the magistrate, united instinctively against a religion which condemned their whole manner of life, and before which, wherever it prevails in its uncorrupted model, every false principle must fall; and, consequently, every system based on superstition and tyranny.

The destruction of these systems of heathen and christened paganism, is foretold in many prophecies, and is the subject of

the vision, chapter xix. 11, &c. But that this may be the more clearly seen it will be necessary to show—I. what the earth is; II. the kings of the earth; III. the beast;[1] IV. the time the symbolical war began, and its period.

I. The earth is the Roman empire; for the Roman empire is called in the Scriptures "the earth" and "the world;" and its provinces, bounded by the Rhine, the Danube, the Ocean, and the Euphrates (the boundaries fixed by Augustus Cæsar[2]) are called by the ancients "the world," "the habitable earth," "the earth," the countries beyond these limits being with them "another world," or "habitable earth."

Plutarch[3] calls the Roman empire, the empire of "the world." —"The triumvirs," says he," divided amongst them the empire of the world as if it had been their private property."

Josephus[4] calls the provinces of the empire, bounded by the Rhine, the Danube, the Ocean, the Libyan desert, and the Euphrates, "the habitable earth," and the outlying countries (as Britain, &c.) "another habitable world."

Virgil and Tacitus likewise consider the empire within these limits the world, and the countries beyond them "another world," which is totally separated from their earth. Virgil[5] says, "the Britains are wholly separated from the whole world;" and Tacitus[6] calls the inhabitants of the empire, "the human race;" the emperor, "the lord of the human race;" the empire, "the world;" and the countries beyond its boundaries (as Parthia), "another world."[7]

Lactantius calls the provinces of the empire, "the earth."— "The whole earth," says he, "from the east to the west, except the Gauls, was harrassed by these wild beasts."[8]

Now if additional evidence were necessary to prove the earth to be the dominions of Rome, the Revelation itself may be appealed to, wherein it is clearly declared to be the nations subject to Rome. St. John sees a woman sitting on a beast with seven heads and ten horns; this woman the angel tells

[1] The explanation of the false prophet and image must be delayed to chapter xiii.
[2] Tacit. An. b. i. c. 9. [3] Plut. in Ant. [4] Wars, b. ii. c. xvi. 4.
[5] Eclogue, i. 67. Et penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos.
[6] Hist. b. i. c. 30; iii. 68; iv. c. 3. [7] An. b. ii. c. 2, alio ex orbe.
[8] "Universa terra," xvi.

him "is that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth."[1]

The "great city" has three marks, which incontestibly establish her identity with Rome. 1. She sits or is built on seven hills. 2. She was under her sixth form of government in the days of the apostle. 3. She reigns over the kings of the earth.

1. She sits on a beast with seven heads and ten horns. A beast in prophecy is the symbol of a great kingdom or tyrannical power. Thus, in Daniel,[2] the "four great beasts," which "come up from the sea, diverse one from another, are four kings," or "kingdoms."

The beast on which the woman sits, has seven heads: which, the prophet tells us, are a double symbol; every head representing two things, a hill and a form of government:—"They (the seven heads) are seven mountains on which the woman sitteth; and (they) are seven kings.[3]" Rome was built on seven hills; the Capitoline, the Palatine, the Quirinal, the Aventine, the Cœlian, the Viminal, and the Æsquiline. Hence, "septicollis," or "the seven hilled," is the well-known designation of Rome.[4]

2. The seven heads are, or represent, "seven kings," or seven

[1] Revelation, xvii. 8, 9, 10, 18; compare iii. 10. Acts, xix. 27. Godefroy Cod. Theo. (vol. v. tit. i, lib. ii. sec. ii.) says, "in the Gospel the whole world is rightly used for the Roman empire;" for Marcus Antoninus, when sole emperor, called himself the "lord of the world." "The empire of Rome filled the world."—*Decline and Fall*, vol. i. p. 100; 8 vols. 8vo.

[2] Daniel, vii. 3, 17, 23. [3] Revelation, xvii. 2.

[4] The Latin poets often make the "seven hills" the characteristic of Rome, and even substitute the "seven hills" for Rome:—

"Diis, quibus septem placuere colles."—*Horace.*
The gods whom the seven hills have pleased.

And—

"Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma
Septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces."—*Virgil.*

Modern writers also make the seven hills a characteristic of Rome. Satan in the "Paradise Regained," book iv., tempts the Lord by showing him

"An imperial city. . . .
On seven small hills. . . .
. . . great and glorious Rome, queen of the earth."

And so Lord Byron—

"O, ye seven hills, awaken!"—
Deformed Transformed.

forms of government, as well as seven hills. Tacitus[1] enumerates six of the seven—kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, tribunes with consular power, and emperors or princes. As the five first had fallen in the time of the Latin historian, the "great city" was under her sixth head, or the imperial government. Now it would be impossible to name another great city which had experienced six successive changes in her constitution When St. John saw the Apocalypse, "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth" was under her sixth "head," "king," or form of government. For the "seven heads" are, or represent, "seven kings" or forms of government; "five" (kings, consuls, dictators, decemvirs, tribunes with consular power) "are fallen;"[2] "one is, &c.," which one is, therefore, the sixth or imperial form, the government subsisting in the time of Livy and Tacitus.

Thus we have in Rome the second Apocalyptic mark of "that great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth;" viz., that, in the Apostle's time, the "great city" was under her sixth form of government.

3. "She reigns over the kings of the earth." Many kings and nations were subject to Rome;[3] and Rome is the only city in the world that reigned in St. John's time, or has since reigned over the kings of the earth: and this, as all writers, ancient and modern, testify, is one of her distinctive characteristics. Horace calls her great and royal, or, regal Rome. Procopius, the lofty city, on the seven hills, that rules over the whole world.[4] Ovid, Domina rerum, the mistress of the world; and Gibbon adopts, alternately, their language and that of the Revelation. "Thus far," says he, "the successful Germans had advanced along the

[1] Tacit. An. b. i. c. 1; compare Livy, b. vi. c. 1. In the prophecy the Roman empire is a beast, and the form of government a head. The Romans called the supreme magistrate, whatever might be the form of government, "caput," a "head," the commonwealth itself, "corpus," a "body."—Livy, iii. 7; Tacit. An. i. 12, 13. Tiberius Cæsar called the supreme power (imperium) "bellua," a "wild beast."—Sueton in Tib. Cæsar, xxiv.

[2] "Five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come." The seventh king will be explained at chapter xii.

[3] Antiochus . . . inservientium regum ditissimus. Antiochus, the richest of the subject kings. Compare Tac. Hist. ii. c. 76, 81, 89; An. iv. 5.

[4] In all ages Rome has been called the "capital of the world." "Go," says the reputed ghost of Romulus to the senator Procopius, "tell the Romans, it is the will of

Æmilian and the Flaminian way, with a design of sacking the defenceless mistress of the world."[1] And again, "Rome[2] was still adored as the queen of the earth." The "queen of the earth" is the imagery of the Revelation; for there "she rules over the kings[3] of the earth," and "sits a queen."

There can, then, be no doubt that the great city which sitteth "on seven hills," and "reigneth over the kings of the earth," and was, in the apostle's time, under her sixth form of government, is Rome; that "the earth" is her dominions; and, II., that the "kings of the earth" are her subject kings or nations.

III. Having thus ascertained the earth and the kings of the earth, we shall now proceed to "the beast," the third subject proposed to be investigated. It is evident that "the beast" is the Roman monarchy, or Rome and her territories under any of her seven forms of government; for the seven heads represent the seven hills, "the septicollis," the "seven-hilled" city, or Rome; and they also represent her seven successive forms of government: Rome, therefore, under any one of them, kingly, consular, or imperial, is a head of the beast. So far is clear. But what constitutes the body of the beast? Is the body coextensive with the provinces of the empire as the boundaries were fixed by Augustus Cæsar? This very important question prophecy enables us to answer in the negative, and to mention some regions that are necessarily excluded from forming a part of the body.

The prophet Daniel sees "four[4] great beasts come up from the sea, diverse one from another." These beasts, representing the empires of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, are con-

the gods that my Rome be the capital of the world."—Livy, b. i. c. 16. Milton makes the angel show Adam

. . . "where Rome was to sway
The world."—*Paradise Lost*, b. xi.

Lord Byron, in the *Deformed Transformed*, introduces Bourbon saying—

. . . . "The world's
Great capital, perchance, is ours to-morrow."

And Goethe writes from Rome—"At last I am arrived in this great capital of the world."—*Autobiography.*

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. i. c. 10, p. 356.
[2] Ib., vol. iv. c. 31, p. 98.
[3] Revelation, xvii. 18; xviii. 7.
[4] Daniel, vii.

sidered in prophecy as living at the same time, and the three first, surviving the fourth. "I beheld," says the prophet, "even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed. As concerning the rest of the beasts they had their dominion taken away; yet their lives were preserved for a season and a time." Consequently, all the beasts being alive at one and the same time, every beast has its own body, or every kingdom its own proper dominions, from which the nations that constitute the body of another beast, are excluded: as Assyria has her own dominions, Persia, her own dominions, and Greece, her own dominions, so Rome must have her own dominions; that is, her dominions must be on this side of Greece. The beast, therefore, is Rome and her proper dominions, to the exclusion of Thrace, Macedonia, Greece, and all the countries which formed a part of the first, of the second, or of the third monarchy.

"It is to be observed," says Bishop Hurd,[1] from Mede and Sir Isaac Newton, "that as the four kingdoms of Daniel, considered in succession to each other, form a *prophetic chronology*, so in another view they form a *prophetic geography*, being considered in the eye of prophecy as co-existent, as still alive, and subsisting, when the dominion of all but the last was taken away. In consequence of this idea, which Daniel gives us of his four kingdoms, so much only is to be reckoned into the description of each kingdom as is peculiar to each; the remainder being part of some other kingdom, still supposed in being, to which it properly belongs. Thus the second, or Persian, does not take in the nations of Chaldæa and Assyria, which make the body of the first kingdom; nor the third, or Græcian kingdom, the countries of Media and Persia, being the body of the second. In like manner, the fourth, or Roman kingdom, does not, in the contemplation of the prophet, comprehend those provinces which make the body of the third, or Græcian kingdom, but such only as constitute its own body, that is, the provinces on this side of Greece."

IV. Having thus ascertained that Rome with her own proper territories, under any of her seven forms of government, is the beast, the fourth thing to be determined is, when the war began, and the period of it.

[1] Sermon xi. on Prophecy, p. 257.

In the Revelation, the ten-horned beasts of chapters xii. and xiii. are regarded as one, though existing in two different states: for the beast is slain and immediately restored to life. "And I beheld," says St. John, "one of his heads as it had[1] been slain to death, and his (the beast's) deadly wound (the wound of his death, or the wound causing his death[2]) was healed,"[3] and he "lived."[4] The beast is, therefore, slain some time during the course of the prophecy (when is necessarily a subject of future inquiry), and is again restored to life, which is symbolically represented (chapter xiii.) by his rising out of the sea.

This is fully borne out by chapter xvii. "The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit; and the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth" (king).[5] In all these places there is only one beast, though he is in two different states. When seen by St. John, he is under his sixth head; afterward he is not, or ceases to be; but he soon[6] rises out of the bottomless[7] pit; and, in this state, he is the eighth king, or ruler, of a monarchy whose capital is the "great city."

This representation made to St. John, of a beast existing in two different states through a long period of time, a portion of which is still future, corresponds with, and is elucidated by, the symbolical prophecy of Daniel. The prophecy is as follows:—"After this I saw in the night visions a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. And I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there

[1] Compare, for this translation, c. v. 6, where the Greek is the same.

[2] Vulnus mortiferum.—Schleusner. [3] xiii. 8. [4] verse 14.

[5] Some have supposed the noun in concord with eighth, is head. A little attention to the meaning of the symbol, head, or the Greek, would show the impossibility of such a construction, and that king is the word referred to.

[6] Holden (cited in Bloomfield's Greek Testament) thus explains verse 11—"And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth," "that did exist" under his former heads, and does not so any longer, but exists under another form.

[7] It has been doubted if the beasts of chapters xiii. and xvii. are the same, because in the one chapter he rises from the sea, in the other, from the bottomless pit. It will be shown that "abussos," the deep or bottomless pit, and sea, have in symbolical language the same signification.

were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in the horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. I beheld, till the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like the pure wool: His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set and the books were opened. I beheld then, because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame."[1]

According to this prophecy, the beast lives till the judgment sits, which is an event still future, when his body will be given to the burning flame; but though his existence is prolonged for an immense period of time, yet, it is not under one, but two different characters he domineers: at first, till he "has devoured the whole earth," and "trodden it down," he tyranises as the beast with "great iron teeth;" afterward, three horns having been plucked up by the roots, it is as the "little horn," with eyes like the "eyes of a man," and "whose look was more stout than his fellows."

It is clear, and it is noticed by expositors, that the beast and the kings of the earth, who, in chapter xvii., make war with the Lamb, are described again, in chapter xix., fighting against Him: the same war is, therefore the subject of two different visions. But, as the beast exists in two different states, before the latter vision can be fully understood, two questions must be answered—did the war commence against him in his second, or first state, and when?

The time of the Revelation, from the opening of the first seal to the termination of the war (xix.), may be divided into two periods—the former ending, when the beast receives his deadly wound, and the second beginning, when his deadly wound is healed (chapter xiii. 3, 12). Now, during the greater

[1] Daniel, vii. St. John's beast, like Daniel's, is finally destroyed by fire. Compare Revelation, xix. 20.

part of the former period, two only of the four powers, represented in chapter xix. 11, &c., "the beast" and "the kings of the earth," are in existence. For the "two-horned beast," or "false prophet," and the "image," are not introduced in the prophecy till "the beast" has been slain; when the "two-horned beast," which had been gradually rising out of the earth, and the "image," become prominent characters; and from this time there are four symbols—the "beast," the "kings of the earth," the "image," and the "two-horned beast," or "false prophet;" denoting so many powers, which are banded together, and fight against the Lamb. But at the beginning of the war, and, obviously, while it has been for some time going on, the "beast" only, and the "kings of the earth," are mentioned:—"And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army" (xix 19). But in the verse which brings the conflict almost to an end, the "false prophet" and "image" are particularized:—"And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." Hence, as the "false prophet" and "image" are not mentioned at the beginning, and are towards the conclusion, of the war, it would appear to have commenced before their time, and, consequently, against the beast in his first state.

Let us see if this can be confirmed. It has been shown[1] that when a prophecy of the Old Testament, having its accomplishment after the Ascension of the Lord, is interwoven in an Apocalyptic vision, both predictions refer to the same events; so that if the scope, place, or time of the one can be ascertained, the time, place, and scope of the other will be known. We shall now endeavour to prove, by means of this principle, that the war continues through a long Apocalyptic period, and that it commenced against imperial Rome, A.D. 66.

The elder Lowth, the bishop, Vitringa, Scott, and other writers on prophecy, maintain, that Isaiah, lxiii. 1–6, and

[1] Ante, pp. 5, 6.

xxxiv., are parallel prophecies. And this opinion is fully sustained by the imagery and language of the predictions, which alike foretell a tremendous outpouring of Divine wrath during the same period, "the day of vengeance," and on the same people, the inhabitants of Edom and Bozrah. But the Apocalyptic vision is parallel with Isaiah, lxiii. 1–6, the same imagery, the treading of the winepress, being introduced in both; and it is, therefore, parallel with that of Isaiah, xxxiv., and will have its accomplishment in the same events. Now, as the fourth verse of Isaiah, xxxiv.—"All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree"—is made a part of the sixth seal, it is fulfilled by the events of the seal; and, consequently, the Apocalyptic vision (xix. 11, &c.) is likewise being then fulfilled. But the majority of commentators are of opinion (and we hope to prove) that the sixth seal describes a great convulsion in the Roman empire, in the fourth century; this being so, the war of vengeance, depicted by St. John, was waged against imperial Rome and her subject kings, as well as against papal Rome and the monarchs who bow to her domination.

THE WAR BEGAN A.D. 66.

The prophet says, "Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword,[1] that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron." "He shall rule them with a rod of iron" is taken from, and identifies the vision with, the vindictive part of the second psalm.

The psalm is a prophecy of the Resurrection of the Lord, His session at the Right hand of the Father, of the preaching of the Gospel, of the vain rage of its enemies and their destruction by the Son, "Who breaks them with a rod of iron, and dashes them in pieces like a potter's vessel." These enemies, as appears from verses 1 and 2, are the heathen and the people, the kings of the earth and the rulers; and who these are, can be easily known, by turning to the fourth chapter of the Acts of

[1] Rev. xix. 15; Psalm, ii. 9. Compare verse 19 of the vision, and 2 of the Psalm.

the Apostles, where this part of the prophecy is quoted and explained:—"Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that therein is; who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together." The Jews, therefore, and the Romans, with their subject nations, are the enemies whom the Son "rules with a rod of iron, and dashes in pieces like a potter's vessel."

The war, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem, the slaughter and dispersion of the Jews, began A.D. 66. And, as a part of the vision and the psalm refer to the same events, the war described in the former, will commence at the same time.

We may arrive at the same date, by a different line of argument.

It has been seen the Lord has a double kingdom;[1] and there are two remarkable periods, noted in the Scriptures, corresponding to this twofold dominion—"the acceptable year of the Lord," and "the day of vengeance." The "day of vengeance" commences after the publication of the Gospel. In Isaiah, the Redeemer is introduced saying, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek: He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of prison to them that are bound, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God."[2] There is, first, "the acceptable year," which begins with the offer of free grace and pardon; then, these being rejected, "the day of vengeance" comes.

Vitringa, on Isaiah, lxi. 2, gives the following general explanation of this day:—"The day of vengeance (says he) is joined to this day of grace (the preaching of the Gospel) from the contents of the entire word of prophecy, proved to the present day by the event and experience. For all the prophets

[1] P. 5, ante. [2] Isaiah, lxi. 1, 2. Compare xxxiv. 8, lxiii. 4.

teach, when the word of the Gospel shall have been published and promulgated, many enemies, the Jews first, and then the Gentiles, stirred up by Satan, shall oppose themselves, with all their strength, power, and authority, to the kingdom of the Son of God, the true Messiah; afterwards, the kingdom of the beast, by far the most formidable of all her enemies, shall prepare for the Church the materials of a long struggle—that all these enemies shall be subdued by the Lord, cast down, and made subject to Himself—that this struggle shall terminate in a terrible outpouring of the Divine anger, to be made in the last time, when it shall seem good to God to purge His Church from scandals, and to destroy the destroyers of the earth."

The three prophecies, Isaiah, xxxiv., lxiii .1–6, and Revelation, xix. 11, &c., are parallel prophecies; the time of the first and second is the day or the year of vengeance; the day or year of vengeance is, therefore, the time of St. John's vision.

If, then, we can ascertain when "the day of vengeance" began, we shall know the commencing period of the symbolical war, Revelation, xix.

St. James,[1] writing to the Jews, says, "Ye have condemned and killed the Just One, and He does not resist you." Then he warns them that their peace and security are but for a short time—"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. . . . The Judge standeth before the door." This epistle was written to the Jews, A.D. 61; the day of vengeance had, therefore, not yet appeared; but its speedy approach is announced.

St. Peter wrote his epistles, according to Lardner, A.D. 63, or 64, or not later than 65. Lardner, Scott, and others, assert the first epistle was addressed both to Jewish and Gentile converts. In the first epistle he writes thus:—"The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God."[2] The Christians, therefore, A.D. 63, 64, or 65, were suffering, or were on the eve of suffering, great persecution; and their persecutors were still at their ease: but it is distinctly intimated that the persecutors shall be speedily exposed to greater calamities than what they inflicted. "The day of

[1] James, v. 8, 9. [2] 1 Peter, iv. 17.

vengeance," therefore, had not commenced A.D. 63, 64, or 65. But it had commenced A.D. 66, when Jerusalem was surrounded by the Roman armies. "When ye shall see," says the Lord, "Jerusalem encompassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let them which are in the midst of it depart out, and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled."[1] "The day of vengeance" may, therefore, be assumed to have commenced A.D. 66.

"The day of vengeance" is represented in Scripture as an outpouring of Divine vengeance on the persecutors of the Church, and on account of their persecutions. "The day of the Lord's vengeance" being "the year of the recompence for the controversy of Zion" (Isaiah, xxxiv. 8).

The disciples of the Lord were persecuted for the first time, by the Roman government, A.D. 64.

A.D. 66, the furious Jewish war burst out.

A.D. 67, another civil war began in Gaul, and was rapidly followed by a series of civil wars, which pervaded every province of the Roman world, and inflicted a wound from which the empire never did, nor could, recover.

It is a curious fact (of which some examples have been already given), and seems deserving of attention, that great writers, in their narratives or allusions to the events of a remarkable prophetic period, often adopt, unconsciously, the imagery and even the language of prophecy.

Tacitus, in his history of these civil wars, regards the miseries to which the empire was then exposed, an outpouring of the "Divine vengeance." "Nor,"[2] says he, "was it ever proved by more dreadful calamities of the Roman people, or by more manifest signs that *vengeance*, not our safety, was the care of the gods."

[1] Luke, xxi. 20, &c.

[2] Nec enim unquam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus, magisve justis indiciis approbatum, non esse curæ deis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem.—His. b. i. c. 3.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND SEAL.

The Red Horse—the Earth—the Peace—Civil Wars—the Sword.

"AND there went out another horse, which was red; and power was given to him that sat thereon to take the peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another; and there was given unto him a great sword."

As the white horse of the first seal represents a state of things, the horse of the second seal (another horse), will likewise represent a state of things.

I have translated the Greek article (omitted before "peace" in the authorized version), because it is in the original. The prophecy is "the peace," not "peace," or any peace, is taken from the earth. The Greek article is always a most important word, showing that the noun to which it is prefixed refers to something already mentioned or very well known; consequently its omission or insertion may greatly alter the meaning of a phrase or sentence. When Nathan said to David, "Thou art the man," it was quite another thing from saying, "Thou art man," or "a man." And so in the present case, there is a great difference between "peace," "a peace," and "the peace." The last obviously means some special, remarkable, and well-known peace.

The article is, therefore, a part, and, I apprehend, a most important part of the prophecy; because it indicates the time when we are to look for the commencement of those events in which the seal has its accomplishment, viz., the rupture of a great peace by civil war.

The characters of the seal are three; 1st, the peace is taken from the earth; 2nd, civil war (for to kill one another, or mutual slaughter, is civil war); 3rd, a sword is given to him that sat on the red horse.

We have seen that "the earth" is the provinces of the Roman empire lying between the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates; if, then, we can find, when a remarkable peace was broken by a great civil war, we shall have the time, the place, and the events to which the seal refers:—provided, we can combine with them the third distinctive mark, "the giving of the sword."

"The peace" was taken from "the earth" in the time of the sixth head of the beast; for the imperial government subsisted long before and after the Apocalypse was seen; and it will be shown, in chapter xii., that the sixth head did not fall, till this and many other visions had been fulfilled. As "the peace" was taken from "the earth," or the Roman world, after the fall of the Republic, and by civil war, it is easy to see that the peace referred to, is the great peace which was obtained by the battle of Actium, and lasted to the end of Nero's reign, nearly one hundred years. This was not only the longest peace Rome had ever known, but it was the last secure peace that was in store for the great city and her subject nations. It was, therefore, a very remarkable peace, and it is noticed as such by all historians.

Gibbon says, "A secure and profound peace, such as had been once enjoyed in the reign of Numa, succeeded to the tumults of the republic, while Rome was still adored as queen of the earth."[1]

Livy observes, "The temple of Janus had been closed twice since the reign of Numa: once by T. Manlius, the consul, at the end of the second Punic war; the second time by the emperor Augustus Cæsar, after the battle of Actium—a blessing the gods had granted to the present age, peace having been obtained by land and sea."[2]

In like manner Tacitus,[3] both in his annals and history, often refers to this peace, calling it "the Peace,"[4] "the long peace."

This secure and profound peace of Gibbon, the peace by land and sea of Livy, the peace and long Peace of Tacitus, was

[1] Gibbon, vol. iv. c. xxxi.
[2] Livy, b. i. c. 19.
[3] Tacit. His. b. i. c. 51; ii. 17; iv. 22: An. b. i. c. 2, 4.
[4] "Pace," "longa pace," "longa pax."

disturbed by the Jewish rebellion, A.D. 66, and completely destroyed by the revolt of all the Roman armies: six great armies revolting almost at the same time, one in Gaul, another in Spain, the legions on the Rhine, the Prætorians at Rome, then the legions in Mæsia and the East—all rejecting the reigning prince, raising whom they pleased to the throne, and making good his title by the sword.

Tacitus, in the beginning of his history of the civil wars, thus describes this disastrous period:—"I enter on a work fruitful in calamities, fierce in battles, discordant with seditions, cruel even in peace itself. Four princes were slain by the sword. Three civil and more foreign wars were carried on at the same time. . . Italy was now afflicted with new slaughters, or slaughters renewed after a series of ages. . . . The city, where they raged with a savage fury, was laid waste by fire, the most ancient temples and the capitol having been burned by the hands of citizens. . . . Nor was it ever made apparent, by more dreadful calamities of the Roman people, or more evident signs, that vengeance, not our safety, was the care of the gods."[1]

The first of these furious wars was the Jewish, which broke out A.D. 66, so unexpectedly, that the Roman troops were everywhere surprised, and all of them, even such as had surrendered on terms, were put to the sword. Every one knows its sanguinary and obstinate character—that the Jews would neither give nor take quarter—that it cost the empire a vast amount of blood and treasure—that rich and flourishing cities were razed or burned to the ground—that it terminated, after a protracted struggle, in the ruin of an entire people, all of whom perished by the sword, by famine, disease, or in captivity. A few passages only, shall therefore be cited from Josephus, to remind the reader of some of the losses sustained by the Roman armies, and the calamities which were inflicted on the provinces most exposed to its flames:—

"Now the people of Cæsarea had slain the Jews that were among them the very same day and hour (in which the soldiers were slain who had surrendered to the Jews) which, one would think, must have come to pass by the direction of Providence; insomuch that in one hour's time

[1] B. i. c. 2.

above twenty thousand Jews were killed, and all Cæsarea was emptied of its Jewish inhabitants; for Florus caught such as ran away, and sent them in bonds to the galleys. Upon which stroke that the Jews received at Cæsarea the whole nation was greatly enraged; so they divided themselves into several parties, and laid waste the villages of the Syrians. . . . However, the Syrians were even with the Jews in the multitude of men they slew; for they killed those who were caught in their cities, and that not only out of the hatred they bare them, as formerly, but to prevent the danger under which they were from them; so that the soldiers in all Syria were terrible, and every city was divided into two armies, encamped one against another, and the preservation of one party was in the destruction of the other; so that the day-time was spent in shedding of blood, and the night in fear. . . . When they made excursions they found Jews that acted as enemies. . . . Besides the murder at Scythopolis, the other cities rose up against the Jews that were among them; those of Askelon slew two thousand five hundred, and those of Ptolemais two thousand, and put not a few into bonds," &c.

In Alexandria blood flowed in torrents—

"These soldiers (Roman) rushed violently into that part of the city that was called Delta, where the Jewish people lived together, and did as they were bidden, though not without bloodshed on their own side also; for the Jews got together, and set those that were best armed among them in the forefront, and made resistance for a great while; but when they once gave back, they were destroyed unmercifully, . . . and fifty thousand of them lay dead upon heaps."

Cestius Gallus, the president of Syria, advanced with a Roman army, before the end of the year, against the Jews—

"But as for the Jews, when they saw the war approach to their metropolis, they left the feast—went in a sudden and disorderly manner to the fight, with a great noise, and without any consideration had of the rest of the seventh day, although the Sabbath was a day to which they had the greatest regard; but the rage which made them forget the religious observation (of the Sabbath) made them too hard for their enemies in the fight; in such violence, therefore, did they fall upon the Romans as to break into their ranks, and to march through the midst of them, making a great slaughter as they went, insomuch that unless the horsemen, and such part of the footmen, as were not yet tired in the action, had wheeled round and succoured that part of the army which was not yet broken,

Cestius and his whole army had been in danger; however, five hundred and fifteen of the Romans were slain."[1]

Cestius advanced to Jerusalem, and surrounded it with his army; but when he might have taken the city, and terminated the war, he retreated suddenly and most unaccountably, on the 7th and 8th of November, A.D. 66—

"The Jews went on pursuing the Romans as far as Antipatris; after which seeing they could not overtake them, they came back and took the engines, spoiled the dead bodies, and gathered the prey together, which the Romans had left behind them, and came back singing and running to their metropolis; while they had themselves lost a few only, but had slain of the Romans five thousand three hundred of the footmen, and three hundred and eighty horsemen."

The rebellion of the Jews was speedily followed by the revolt of all the Roman armies and many of the allies; by commotions in Pontus, and the destructive inroads of the Sarmatians and Germans.

A.D. 67. Vindex and the Gauls revolted. In the following year the legions of the Rhine defeated his army, and slaughtered twenty thousand men;[2] they then devastated Gaul, refused the inhabitants who did not join them the name of "allies;" calling them "Galbians," "enemies," and "conquered."[3]

Galba, who was implicated with Vindex, revolted about the same time, in Spain, marched on Rome, and (Nero having killed himself) assumed the imperial dignity with the approbation of the senate, of the city, and of the provinces. But the legions of the Rhine, elated by their recent victory, and domineering in the transalpine provinces, refused to take or immediately broke the oath of allegiance, and made Vitellius emperor. The Roman world had now three sovereigns: for Galba, who was old, and childless, and terrified by the gathering storm, had associated Piso in the empire.

The Prætorian cohorts next revolted, proclaimed Otho

[1] Wars, b. ii. c. xviii. vol ii. pp. 299, 300, 308.

[2] Plutarch in Galba.

[3] Nec "socios," ut olim, sed hostes et victos vocabant. . . . Galbianos.—Tacit., b. i. c. 51.

emperor, murdered Galba and Piso, and filled Rome with blood and terror.

The struggle for the "throne of nations" now seemed to lie between Otho and Vitellius: and it would not be easy to say which was the more profligate, base, and abandoned.[1]

Vitellius commenced the war by sending two armies by different routes into Italy.[2] Fabius Valens, with forty thousand men, was ordered to gain over, or, if they refused, to devastate, the Gauls, and burst into Italy by the Cottian Alps. Cæcina, with thirty thousand, was to proceed by the shorter way of the Pennine mountains. Vitellius himself intended to follow with the whole strength of his army (tota mole belli).[2]

The march of the two advanced corps might be traced in blood.[3] At Divodurum,[4] a peaceable and friendly town of Gaul, the soldiers of Valens' army, seized "with fury and madness, slaughtered," unprovoked by any known cause, four thousand of the inhabitants; and they were prevented only by the prayers of their general from utterly destroying the city.[5]

Cæcina, meeting some opposition in Helvetia, attacked with his veterans the undisciplined bands that rashly resisted him, and, without giving any opportunity of repentance, slaughtered[6] many thousands, and sold many thousands as slaves.

The advance of Otho's troops towards the maritime Alps, to encounter one of these formidable masses, was not less terrible to the parts of Italy which they traversed. Tacitus thus describes it:—"They burned, devastated, plundered the coasts and cities as if they belonged to an enemy, the more barbarously because the inhabitants, unsuspicious of danger, had nowhere taken any precaution against it. The fields were full; masters of families, with their wives and children, passing to and fro,

[1] Tacitus calls them "pessimis ac flagitiosissimis."—Hist. ii. 37. Vitellius was distinguished for sloth, eating and drinking. Tacitus, in very civil language, calls him a hog. Otho was pre-eminent for luxury and insatiable lust.

[2] Tacit., b. i. 61. [3] Ib., b. i. c. 67. [4] Ib. b. i. c. 68.

[5] It is one of the terrible features of this calamitous civil war, that the discipline of the armies was completely destroyed, and the soldiers generally acted as they pleased.

[6] "Multa hominum millia cæsa, multa sub corona venumdata."—Tacit., Hist. b. i. 68.

were encompassed, in the security of peace, with the perils of war."[1]

Fortune favoured Otho in the beginning; but his troops having been defeated in a bloody battle, which lasted two days, he killed himself; and peace appeared to be restored. "But Italy," says Tacitus, "was more grievously and cruelly oppressed than by the war. The Vitellians, dispersing through the colonies and municipal towns, robbed, pillaged, and polluted every place by their fury and the gratification of the most abominable lusts. The soldiers slew their personal enemies, and being thoroughly acquainted with the country, marked out the well-stocked farms for plunder, or, if resisted, the owners for destruction. The leaders, conscious of their own guilt, did not dare to restrain them. Italy, long since exhausted, bore with difficulty such immense numbers of cavalry and infantry, their violence, the losses and injuries they inflicted.[2]

Nor was the march of Vitellius less disastrous to the provinces through which it lay. His army consisted of sixty thousand men, augmented by a still greater number of camp servants, who were the most dissolute and abandoned wretches of the whole Roman population.

Tacitus says, all with him was one general scene of drunken disorder, and more like midnight and Bacchanalian revels than the discipline of a camp; that, as he approached the city, the multitude was augmented by the senators, knights, the populace, buffoons, players, and charioteers, who poured forth to meet him; that not only the colonies and municipal towns, but the husbandmen themselves and the fields, (the harvest being ripe) were plundered and devastated like an enemy's country.

When the army and its train of followers entered Rome, the troops were allowed to ramble about the streets, to take up their quarters in the temples, in the forums, and where they pleased, to brawl, to murder, to weaken their minds and bodies by indulging in ease and giving way to the vilest passions. Vitellius granted whatever the soldiers asked, "not only from innate sloth of mind, but conscious, if he refused, their next demand would be a donative and that there was no money."[3]

[1] Tacit., His. ii. c. 12. [2] Ib. His. ii. c. 56. [3] Ib. His. ii. c. 68. 87, 88. 93, 94.

But while the emperor and his armies were thus rioting in luxury and in blood, a new and more furious civil war was on the eve of bursting out:[1] for, the forces in the west, which after Otho's death had submitted and taken the oath of allegiance to Vitellius, revolted; and, about the same time, the legions in the east made their general, Vespasian, Cæsar. The struggle for the dominion of the world now lay between Vespasian and Vitellius. The army[2] of the latter was defeated in three battles with the loss of more than thirty thousand men.[3]

There was at that time a celebrated fair at Cremona, and the city was crowded with merchants and visiters from every part of Italy. The Roman general and his army thought they had now an excellent opportunity of indemnifying themselves for their toils, so they resolved to pillage the town. "Forty thousand armed men," says Tacitus, "burst into Cremona, and a greater number of camp servants and suttlers, who, by their deeper depravity, are more addicted to lust and cruelty. Neither dignity nor age afforded any protection, that lust and murder, murder and lust, should not go hand in hand. Very old men, and women on the verge of the grave, a worthless booty, were dragged about in mockery. When a full-grown virgin or a male of graceful form was met, he was torn in pieces by the ravagers, who then fell by deeds of mutual slaughter. Many, whilst they dragged forth, every one for himself, money or the gifts of the temples, massive with gold, were slain by others who were stronger than themselves. Some, despising what could be easily obtained, searched for hidden wealth by scourging and torturing its owners, and dug up the buried treasure." They then wantonly fired the city. "Cremona lasted four days, when every thing, sacred and profane, sunk in the fire. The temple of Mephitis alone stood before the walls, defended by the place or the deity."[4]

Tacitus,[5] after giving an account of some commotions, revolts, and wars in the east, which, with those in the west, he calls a

[1] Tacit. b. ii., c. 86.

[2] Their leader wished to bring the Vitellians over to Vespasian, but his treachery being discovered, the soldiers imprisoned him and fought without commanders. See Tacit. His. b. iii., 13, 14, &c.

[3] Josephus says the Vitellians lost nearly 31,000, and the Vespasians 4,500.—Wars b. iv., c. 11.

[4] His. b iii., 33. [5] Ib. iii., 49, "hac totius orbis mutatione."

"changing of the whole world," returns to Antony, who "traversed Italy as if it had been taken from an enemy," permitting the soldiers, without an attempt to control them, to act as they pleased.

In the meantime, the civil war, which was supposed to have ended, blazed out again at Rome. The capitol was attacked, defended, and burned to the ground; and Sabinus, the brother of Vespasian, with many of his party, was slain. Antonius now hastened to Rome. Many battles were fought with various success before the walls, but the Vespasians bursting at last into the city, the Vitellians were driven, after an obstinate resistance, into the fortified camp. The camp was now furiously attacked, fiercely defended, taken, and all the Vitellians slain.[1]

During the progress of the civil wars, Civilis, a German mercenary, who had been long in the imperial service, revolted; and, alluring many of his countrymen to his standard, he defeated the Roman legions in several engagements, took their winter-quarters, and was, with difficulty, induced to submit to Vespasian, on securing by treaty, very advantageous terms.[2]

The civil wars ended with the destruction of Jerusalem, and the slaughter and dispersion of the Jews.

In the seal "the peace" is taken from the earth. The earth is the provinces of the Roman empire, which are called by Josephus "the habitable earth," and by the Latin writers "the world," and "the earth." Tacitus thus describes the course and extent of these wars. "The civil arms taken up by the Spains and Gauls, the Germans, then Illyricum, having been stirred up to engage in the war, seemed to have ended, after that they had passed through Ægypt, Syria, and all the provinces and armies, as if the world had been expiated by a sacrifice."[3]

It is easy to imagine that the losses of the empire in these dreadful civil wars, pervading all her armies and every province, must have been immense. Every battle was worse than a defeat

[1] The Vitellians fought with the greatest bravery. Tacitus—His. b. iii., c. 84—says, "all fell with their wounds before, and facing the enemy."

Josephus—Wars, b. iv., c. 11—and Dion Cassius, say, 50,000 were killed at Rome in these last conflicts.

[2] His. v., c. 26. Gibbon.

[3] Ib. iv., 3.

in a foreign war, because Roman was opposed to Roman, and each side fought with Roman[1] skill and bravery; the victors pursued the victory with the exasperated feelings of personal rivalry and animosity; and, whatever party conquered, the wounds, sustained and inflicted, were alike the wounds of the state, fatal to her strength and to her legions. The bands, moreover, of civil government, being dissolved, the unarmed population of the cities, the villages, and the open country, were the prey of the soldiers, the camp servant, and the vilest of the people: who pillaged the towns, devastated the country, robbed, insulted, tortured and murdered, without mercy or pity, the defenceless inhabitants. The damage of such a war cannot be estimated: but all the miseries and losses it caused were perhaps trifling in comparison with another evil, the power of the sword, which was then brought to light, and fully developed. For it was now clear, that the army could control the civil government—that an army in Spain, on the Rhine, at Rome, or any where else, could make or unmake an emperor, and kindle in a moment the flames of civil war.

A SWORD WAS GIVEN TO HIM.

A SWORD is the symbol of judicial authority or of military violence; as it is here evidently the symbol of the latter, it is to be shown, that at the opening of the seal a power or principle (besides the civil wars) was developed, producing a state of things which corresponds with the symbolical representation of a horseman on a red horse, to whom a sword is given. Since the theatre of these events is the Roman empire, and in the time of the sixth head of the beast, it is necessary to ascertain accurately the nature of the imperial government. The imperial system, as instituted by Augustus, was a military and absolute monarchy, the real nature of which was concealed from the armies, the people, and the provinces, by republican names and the forms of an elective monarchy: the first emperors pretending to be consuls, prætors, tribunes, and to hold their office by the nomination and election of the people and senate.

[1] Romanæ utrimque artes.—Tac. His. b. iii. c. 27.

This is Mr. Gibbon's[1] representation, and it is confirmed by Tacitus. "After the battle of Actium,"[2] the latter says, "all power centred in the hands of the prince, all regarded the republic (ut alienæ) as belonging to another, and looked to the orders of the prince, (jussa principis aspectare,) but the names of the magistrates were the same." [3]Tiberius cautiously maintained the same artful system.

By these means, "the pretext of the senate[4] and the name of the City," the armies and provinces were made to believe the emperor was elected by the senate and people, and that an emperor could be made no where else than at Rome. Hence, Rufus, who defeated Vindex, refused the purple when it was offered to him by his soldiers, because, (as he said,) the right to make an emperor "belonged to the senate and people."[5] And the same[6] legions, when they revolted from Galba, at first referred the choice of the emperor to the senate and Roman people. But, by the death of Nero and those events which so rapidly followed, as Tacitus says, "the secret of the empire was disclosed, that the prince might be made elsewhere than at Rome."[7] It now and at once became a subject of public display, of talk, and of boasting, that the soldiers could confer the empire on whom they pleased. And Galba openly asserted its military tenure, assumed the symbol, and realized the imagery of the seal: for he[8] marched from Spain to Rome, at the head of his army, equipped in his military dress, "with a sword suspended all the way from his neck;" and he entered the city in the same warlike manner, having first slain[9] seven thousand prætorians.

Dion Cassius[10] writes, "Otho was hated, because he made the

[1] Decline and Fall, c. iii. pp. 81, 87, 126, (viii. vols. octavo.)

[2] Tacit. Hist. b. i. c. 1. An. b. i. c. 2, 3, 4, 10. Suet. in Angus. 26.

[3] Tacit. Ann. b. i. c. 7, 25, 81. b. iii. c. 60. Suet, in Tib. 24, 25.

[4] Tacit. His. b. i. c. 76, "Sed erat grande momentum in nomine Urbis ac prætextu senatûs." "But there was great weight in the name of the City and the pretext of the senate."

[5] Γερουσιᾳ και δημῳ προσηκειν τουτ ελεγεν. Dion. Cass. b. 63.

[6] Tacit. Hist. b. i. c. 12. c. 4.

[7] Evulgato imperii arcano posse principem alibi, quam Romæ fieri.

[8] Galba in Suet. 11 Dion. Cassius, lxiv. 3, ὅτι δε ξιφος δια παασης της ὁδου εξηρτᾶτο.

[9] Dion. Cassius.

[10] ὁτι αποκτεῖναι Καισαρα και ποιησαι δυνανται, b. lxiv. c. 8.

empire venal, subjected the city to the most depraved, despised the senate and people, and persuaded the soldiers that they could kill and make the Cæsar." And according to[1] Tacitus, the army was told, that "Galba was made prince by the authority of the sixth legion;" and[2] when Vespasian hesitated to receive the purple from the soldiers, Mucianus urged him to accept it, "because," (says he,) "Vitellius is a proof that the prince can be made by an army."

From this time the emperors were obliged to purchase the fidelity of the soldiers, by granting them great privileges and frequent donatives.[3] For, as Gibbon justly remarks, "the rapid downfall of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius taught the armies to consider the emperors as the creatures of their *will* and the instruments of their license."—(c. iii. 89.)

Having now shown that the earth, or Roman world, enjoyed a long and a very remarkable peace, that the peace was taken from it by furious civil wars, which consumed the vitals of the empire, that the emperors, the senate, and the treasures of the state, were henceforth in the hands of the men of the sword, we shall notice some other wars that are thought to come within the scope of the prophecy, and then conclude the exposition.

The Jews again broke out into rebellion in the reign of Trajan, and acted with their accustomed ferocity. In Cyrene they slew two hundred and twenty thousand of the Greeks; and in Egypt two hundred and forty thousand. They were finally defeated by Lucius and other imperial generals, and treated with great rigour. The third and last Jewish war, whose leader was the false Messiah, Barchochab, began in the reign

[1] Tact. Hist. b. v. c. 16. [2] B. ii. c. 76.

[3] "The firmest and best established princes," Gibbon says, "were obliged to purchase the precarious faith of the soldiers by liberal donatives." Hadrian, on one occasion, gave the Prætorians £2,500,000 sterling.—chap. v. p. 126, and note. Casperius Ælianus, the prefect, excited the soldiers to demand the death of some obnoxious persons, and though Nerva, the emperor, opposed his own throat to their swords, he could not save the lives of the unhappy men. This insurrection caused him to adopt Trajan, who commanded on the Rhine. In the reign of Commodus, the army in Britain were displeased with the Prætorian prefect, Perennis; they deputed fifteen hundred of their body, who marched through Italy to Rome, slew Perennis in the camp, with his wife, his sister, and his two sons.—Dion. Cass. b. 68. 30. b. 72. 9. 10.

of Adrian, when they had greatly recovered their strength and were again a powerful people. In this civil war "fifty of their strongest castles, and nine hundred and eighty-five of their best towns were demolished, five hundred and eighty thousand men ware slain by the sword, besides an infinite number who had perished by famine, and sickness, and other casualties." The losses of the Romans were so great that the emperor forbore the usual salutations to the senate."[1]

There were many important foreign wars in the reigns of Domitian, Trajan, and Marcus Antoninus; and occasionally some very threatening revolts of the armies: we shall not, however, dwell on them, but pass on to those events which are generally agreed to terminate the period of this seal, or rather to prepare, in conjunction with the previous state of the armies, the events which fulfil the next seal.

Commodus having succeeded his father, Marcus Antoninus, to whom the hardships of eight campaigns with the Marcomanni had proved fatal, was murdered A. D. 192. The prætorian guards murdered his successor, Pertinax, and sold the empire by auction to Didius Julian. But the legions in Pannonia, Britain, and Spain, rejected him, and raised each their own general to the purple: thus renewing the former scenes of military violence. There were now four Roman emperors, Didius Julian, Severus, Albinus, and Niger. The three last prepared to make good their title by the sword. The civil war terminated in four years, in the complete success of Severus.

The victory over Julian was easy. He was speedily forsaken by all, taken, and put to death.

Severus defeated his Syrian competitor in two battles, the one near the Hellespont, the other in the narrow defiles of Cilicia. And "the battle of Lyons, where one hundred and fifty thousand Romans engaged, was equally fatal to Albinus."[2]

The civil war ended with the destruction of Byzantium. Its ruin opened the provinces of the east to the Goths and other barbarians.

"Byzantium," says Gibbon, "at length surrendered to famine. The

[1] See Mede and Bishop Newton on the Apocalypse, (second seal,) who have collected these facts from Dion, Eusebius, and other historians.

[2] Gibbon Decline and Fall.

magistrates and the soldiers were put to the sword, the walls demolished, the privileges suppressed, and the destined capital of the east subsisted only as an open village, subject to the insulting jurisdiction of Perinthus. The historian Dion, who had admired the flourishing, and lamented the desolate, state of Byzantium, accused the revenge of Severus for depriving the Roman people of the strongest bulwark against the barbarians of Pontus and Asia. The truth of this observation was but too well justified in the succeeding age, when the Gothic fleets covered the Euxine, and passed through the unguarded Bosphorus into the centre of the Mediterranean."[1]

During the time of this seal, about one hundred and thirty years, besides many foreign wars and some rebellions of not much consequence, there were nine great civil wars, in which whole provinces were wasted, rich and powerful cities pillaged, burnt, or razed, and millions of the inhabitants destroyed by deeds of mutual violence; at the commencement and the end of it every army in the empire revolted, appointed its own emperor, and enforced his title with the sword. In these civil conflicts and battles the finest troops of the state were consumed, their discipline irretrievably ruined, and the city which was the bulwark of the east levelled with the ground: but the loss of many myriads of her best soldiers, of so many millions of her subjects, the destruction of so many cities, the devastation of her richest provinces, and the disorganization of her armies, were not the greatest calamity that the civil wars entailed on Rome; the discovery of the fatal secret, that her peace and destinies were in the hands of the soldiers, (the legions and the Prætorians,) was an evil of even greater magnitude, because it was an evil that admitted of no remedy.

[1] Gib. c. v. 145.

CHAPTER V.

THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE CIVIL WARS.

When the First Fatal Wound was inflicted on the Roman Empire—the Loss sustained by her Armies in their numerical strength and discipline by the rupture of the peace—the Power the Armies obtained at the Death of Nero—the Change in their Composition—the Sentiments of Tacitus—the inconsistent Statements of Gibbon.

I THINK it has been proved that the empire received a fatal wound, on the rupture of the peace, but as Mr. Gibbon[1] appears to assign the period subsequent to the death of Antoninus for its decline, it becomes necessary to give my reason for dissenting from this celebrated writer. They are, I., the loss sustained by the Roman armies, both in their numerical strength and discipline; II. the power which the armies obtained at the death of Nero; III. the change made then, or soon afterward, in their composition; IV. the authority of Tacitus; V. Gibbon's own statements.

I. It is needless, after what has been already said, to prove that the discipline of the legions was ruined during these civil commotions; we shall, therefore, proceed, at once, to ascertain, as nearly as possible, the numerical losses of the Roman armies. We can, however, make an approximation only; but there is evidence that two-thirds, if not three-fourths, of the best troops of the empire were disorganized or destroyed.

In one battle the Jews slew nearly 6,000 of the Romans.[2]

Vindex perished with 20,000[3] of his men; and, of course, the victors did not conquer without loss. Galba slew 7,000[4] Prætorians near Rome. And eight cohorts, 4,800[5] men, the auxilia-

[1] "The Prætorian bands, whose licentious fury was the first symptom and cause of the decline of the Roman empire."—Decline and Fall, c. v. p. 125, and compare p. 1.

[2] Josephus's Wars, b. ii. c. 19. [3] Plut. in Galba. [4] Dion Cassius, b. lxiv.

[5] Tacit. His. b. i. c. 59. Josephus says they were 4,800.

ries of the fourteenth legion, revolted to Civilis in the beginning of the war.

It is not easy to determine with certainty the amount of the Vitellian army—but the attempt can be made: and there is no difficulty in tracing its fate. The army of the Rhine usually consisted of eight legions[1] (one of which appears to have been stationed in Rhætia); all these troops, with the Italian legion, and three legions in Britain, declared for Vitellius.[2] He had, therefore, twelve legions, nearly the half of all the armies of the empire. When the legions from Britain had joined him, he sent Cæcina[3] into Italy, with the twenty-first legion and some auxiliaries, in all thirty thousand men; and Valens, with the fifth legion, some cohorts and cavalry, in all forty thousand: Vitellius himself was to follow with the strength of his army; and though he was obliged to leave some of his forces on the Rhine, to oppose Civilis, and keep the Germans in check, he had, for his Italian wars, nine or ten legions, which, with their auxiliaries, could have been little less than 130, or 140 thousand men.

Gibbon,[4] says that "the legion might, with its attendant auxiliaries, amount to 12,500 men." This is the estimated amount in the time of Hadrian, and when there was peace; but at the commencement of the civil war, the legion, with its attendant auxiliaries, seems to have been 15,000. Vitellius,[5] when he entered Rome, had with him four legions, thirty-four cohorts, and twelve squadrons of horse; in all 60,000 men. And Vespasian, when he commanded in the Jewish war, had four legions, which, with their auxiliaries, amounted to 60,000 men.[6] The legion, therefore, at this time, with its auxiliaries, appears to have been 15,000. It is not, then, unreasonable to conclude, as one of the armies, in which there were only two legions, amounted to 70,000 men, that all the forces of Vitellius could not have fallen short of 200,000.

They were the bravest and best troops in the empire; and they appeared so formidable to the able and experienced

[1] Tacit. An. b. iv. c. 5.
[2] Ib. Hist. b. i. c. 55, 59, 61; b. ii. c. 100.
[3] Ib. Hist. b. i. c. 61.
[4] Decline and Fall, c. i vol. i. p. 20.
[5] Tacit. His. b. ii. c. 89, and 87.
[6] Josephus, Wars, b. iii. c. 4.

Vespasian,[1] that when his legions saluted him emperor, he shuddered at the idea of encountering the German army.

These immense veteran forces were slain, or lost to the empire, before the end of the war. Dion Cassius informs us that 80,000 men fell in the battles fought near Cremona, and 40,000 of them were Vitellians.[2]

After the death of Otho, and the restoration of peace, Vitellius' conduct was not less fatal to the armies than the war: he disbanded the Prætorians who had fought against him, dismissed the Gallic auxiliaries, reduced the numbers in each of the legions, ordered them not to be recruited, and granted promiscuous discharges;[3] he formed, moreover, 16,000 Prætorian guards, and four city cohorts, each 1,000 strong, by drafting men indiscriminately from the legions. By these different ways the legions must have been greatly reduced; and the Gallic auxiliaries, as the Gauls had now revolted, were very probably lost to the empire.

When the war was renewed nearly 31,000[4] Vitellians were slain in the battle of Cremona; and about 4,500 of Antony's troops. In the many battles fought before, and in, Rome, between the Vitellians and Vespasians (without adverting to the losses when the capitol was burned, and in many other contests) fifty thousand[5] Romans fell; and almost all Vitellius' forces which were at Rome, must have been then destroyed.[6]

Let us now look towards the Rhine. Civilis, a German mercenary, trained in the Roman art of war, revolted: he pretended, at first, to take up arms against Vitellius, to enlist soldiers, and fight for Vespasian: by these pretexts he allured many of the Gallic towns and provinces to his party, and finally induced them to revolt from the Romans, and assert their own independence. The Roman legions were defeated in several

[1] Tacit. ii. 75. Versabatur ante oculos Germanici exercitus robur, notum viro militari.

[2] επεσονδε τεσσαρες μυριαδες ἀνδρῶν εκατερωθεν εν ταις μαχαις ταις προς τῃ Κρημωνῃ γενομεναις.—Dion. Cass. lxiv. 10.

[3] Tacit. Hist. ii. 93, 94. The granting promiscuous discharges, Tacitus says, was fatal to the republic—id exitiabile reipublicæ.

[4] Josephus' Wars, b. iv. c. 11. [5] Ib., and Dion. Cass.

[6] Tacit. Hist. b. iii. c. 84. Josephus says all the Vitellians were cut to pieces.

engagements; and their winter quarters were twice taken and destroyed. After the death of Vitellius the remains of his troops,[1] in the vicinity of the Rhine, revolted from the empire, out of hatred to Vespasian, and took the oath of allegiance to the empire of the Gauls. [2]The legions which had long and bravely defended their camp now submitted to Civilis: their camp was pillaged and burned. The rest of the soldiers along the Rhine passed over to the same party. Thus, it appears, that before the end of the civil war, all Vitellius' vast army must have been lost to the empire, by death, by desertions, dismissals and revolts, or the total want of discipline. Immense as this loss was, it was not the whole. For Vespasian's party must have suffered severely in the conflicts at Rome, when the capitol was burnt, his friends defeated, and Sabinus slain. The troops commanded by Antony, would also be greatly diminished in the many battles they fought with the Vitellians; and the ruin of their discipline would be more fatal to the empire than the diminution of their numerical strength. In one battle they lost 4,500 men, and we have seen that 40,000 of Otho's troops were slain in the first campaign.

Now, if these losses be calculated, to which must be added the 20,000 slain under Vindex, the 7,000 slain by Galba, the 4,800 that revolted in the beginning of the civil commotions, the numbers slain in the Jewish rebellion, in one battle 6000, the innumerable disasters during the course of a war which pervaded every province and every army of the empire, and exposed the frontiers to the incursions of the Germans, the Dacians, and the Sarmatians, it is more than probable three-fourths of the Roman armies were either destroyed or totally disorganized.

II. The armies from this time became conscious of their power, and, that the fate of the empire and emperor was in their hands. For they knew that the prince could be made elsewhere than at Rome, and "The rapid downfall of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius had taught them to consider the emperors as the creatures of *their* will, and the instruments of *their* license."[3]

[1] Tacitus says "the Vitellian legions." If all revolted they were five.—b. iv., c. 54. 36, 37. The effective strength of the legion must, however, by that time, have been vastly diminished by war, by desertions, and the reductions Vitellius ordered or permitted. [2] Tacit. His. iv., 59, 60, and compare c. 62.

[3] Decline and Fall, c. iii., vol. 1, 89.

III. In the time of Augustus Cæsar, and at the accession of Tiberius,[1] the Roman armies were composed entirely of citizens and allies, but during the civil wars, foreign mercenaries appear to have been freely enlisted,[2] and before the end of the first century they formed the strength of the legions.

Gibbon observes—"The introduction of barbarian auxiliaries into those armies was a measure attended with very obvious dangers, as it might gradually instruct the Germans in the arts of war and policy, although they were admitted in small numbers and with the strictest precaution. The example of Civilis was proper to convince the Romans that the danger was not imaginary."[3]

It appears, then, that foreign mercenaries, at one time, were not in the Roman armies, that they were admitted in great numbers during the civil wars, and that their admission was pregnant with danger; not only however, because the Germans might learn the arts of war and policy, but also, and, especially, because a mercenary army would know little of, and care less for Roman institutions, and be always ready to revolt and sell their services to the highest bidder. Now, when Tacitus wrote, towards the end of the first century, the citizens and allies had almost entirely disappeared from the armies; for, as D'Anville[4] observes, they then drew all their strength from a foreign militia, and (quoting the words of Tacitus) "that there was then no strength in the Roman armies except what was foreign."

This early change in the composition of the Roman armies, appears to have escaped the notice of Mr. Gibbon, who has been led, doubtless, thereby, to make a statement which is not supported by the fact. "The Romans, *after the fall of the republic*,[5] combatted only for the choice of masters. Under the standard of a popular candidate for empire, a few enlisted from affection, some from fear, many from interest, and none from principle. The legions, uninflamed by party zeal, were allured into civil

[1] Tacit. An. b. i. c. 11. [2] Ib. Hist. b. i., 61, b. ii., 21, 35. b. iii., 33.

[3] Decline and Fall, c. 11.

[4] Ne peut-on pas être étonné de ce que dès le temps où Tacite écrivoit, c'est-à-dire vers la fin du premier siècle, les armées Romaines tiroient toute leur force des milices étrangères? Nihil validum, dit-il, in Romanis exercitibus, nisi externum.—D'Anville états formés en Europe, &c., p. 4. [5] Decline and Fall, v. p. 144.

war by liberal donatives, and still more liberal promises. A defeat, by disabling the chief from the performance of his engagement, dissolved the mercenary allegiance of his followers, and left them to consult their own safety by a timely desertion of an unsuccessful cause."

This is perfectly correct, if it be restricted to the later, but it is certainly not true as regards the first, civil wars, after the fall of the republic. It is an undoubted fact that the armies both of Otho and of Vitellius were vehemently inflamed by party zeal and love of their respective princes, (probably because few in comparison were mercenaries) and they refused to take the oath of allegiance to the rival and successful candidate, or embraced the earliest opportunity of revolting.

According to Tacitus,[1] Otho's troops fought with the greatest fidelity after their defeat in the murderous battle of Bebriacum; they exhorted him to be of good courage, they assured him that powerful armies still remained, that they were ready to bear and dare everything, they passionately deplored his death, many refused to survive him, and all the armies that had declared for Otho, revolted after their submission to Vitellius, and furiously opposed him. And Vitellius' soldiers were equally faithful. [2]They deposed Cæcina from the command when he attempted to bring them over to Vespasian, and they chose to fight three battles at Cremona without a commander, and to be cut to pieces at Rome,[3] rather than desert their cause; and the legions[4] near the Rhine, actuated by a like party spirit, preferred a foreign servitude to the hated yoke of Vespasian. It is most probable the same army would have been equally faithful to Nero, had he not so hastily killed himself: at least it is certain they were actuated

[1] Non expectavit militum ardor vocem imperatoris: "bonum habere animum" jubebant; superesse adhuc novas vires, et ipsos extrema passuros, ausurosque: neque erat adulatio.....Nec prætoriani tantum, proprius Othonis miles, sed præmissi e Mœsia, "eamdem obstinationem adventantis exercitus, legiones Aquileiam ingressos" muntiabant: ut nemo dubitet potuisse renovari bellum atrox, lugubre, in certum victis, et victoribus. Hist. b. ii., 46, 49, 85, 86. b. iii., 44. And Dion Cassius and Plutarch give a like account of the devoted zeal and affection of Otho's troops. "The Pannonian army," says the former, "loved and had all affection for Otho, not only from the tongue, but even from the soul." Εφιλουν τε τον Οθωνα και πασαν αυτῳ ευνοιαν ουκ απο της γλοττης μονον, αλλα και απο της ψυχῆς ειχον.

[2] Tacit. Hist. b. iii., c. 13, 14, &c. [3] Ib. iii. 84. [4] Ib. iv. 54.

by party zeal; for when they extirpated the army of Vindex, they furiously persecuted, as "Galbians,"[1] all who were suspected of favouring his cause.

IV. We have seen, from the testimony of Tacitus and other historians, that the greatest part of the Roman armies were disorganized and cut to pieces in the civil wars—that the armies were, from that time, composed chiefly of mercenaries—and that they were made sensible that the fate of the government and of the emperor was in their hands; now it is not possible that an historian of the great integrity and abilities of Tacitus could have these facts before his mind, without perceiving the extreme danger of the empire, and that it was rapidly declining. Accordingly, we find him often insinuating and sometimes distinctly declaring its near and inevitable ruin.

Besides the evils inseparable from such a general and disastrous civil war, he frequently alleges that Vitellius in his short administration inflicted a deep and even fatal wound on the country: for he exhausted in feasting (six millions sterling being thus spent in a few months,) and donatives the resources of the state—reduced the numerical strength of the legion[2]—freely bestowed treaties on allies and the rights of Latium on foreigners—remitted the tributes to some, and gratified others with immunities—that these grants could neither be made nor received with safety[3] to the commonwealth—and, in a word, that he lacerated the empire without any regard to the future. Now it is plain, however necessary their resumption might be for the public good and the maintenance of authority, that the grants, having been once made, could not be safely recalled.

Nor were these the only causes that filled the mind of the great Roman historian with gloomy and foreboding thoughts of the approaching ruin of his country; for he dreaded the treachery of the allies, and above all the power of the Germans. He declares, "The Roman empire was nearly destroyed (during the civil wars), by foreign violence (of the people beyond the Rhine and the Danube,) and by the *perfidy of the allies*."[4] And when the Gauls, at the termination of the civil war, returned to their

[1] Tacit. Hist. b. i. 51. [2] Ib. Hist. b. ii. 69. [3] Ib. iii. 55, Salvâ republicâ.
[4] Ib. Externâ vi, perfidia sociali, prope adflicta Romana res.—Hist. b. iii. c. 46.

allegiance, he makes Cerialis, the Roman general, thus address them: "if the Romans are overthrown, (which may the gods forbid,) what else will there be than wars amongst all nations. The empire has coalesced into one compact mass by the fortune and discipline of eight hundred years; and it cannot be pulled to pieces without the ruin of those who pull it down. You are yourselves in the greatest danger, you have gold and wealth, the chief causes of war."[1] This passage displays the profound sagacity of Tacitus: it is, however, not cited on this account, but to show what his sentiments were, as regards the existing perils of the empire, and the quarter from which the most urgent dangers were to be apprehended. For, if he had not been conscious of her weakness and impending fate, he would not have had, and consequently could not have given utterance to such dismal forebodings.

There is another passage in his Germany, wherein his opinions of the near and inevitable fall of the empire are declared still more distinctly. Having expressed great exultation at the slaughter of sixty thousand of the Bructeri by some of their German brethren, he prays that their mutual hatred may be lasting. "Since," says he, "the fates of the empire being urgent, fortune can confer on us no greater favour than to excite discord amongst our enemies."[2]

[This passage must detain us a little, for Gibbon reads and understands it differently. [3]He says "urgentibus" should be vergentibus, and he translates "vergentibus imperii fatis," "We have *now attained the utmost verge of prosperity*, and have nothing left to demand of fortune, except the discord of these barbarians." Had not Gibbon considered this passage very much in his way, he would scarcely have thought of translating vergentibus imperii fatis, "we have attained the utmost verge of prosperity." Vergere means to bend towards, to decline, or to sink; not to rise to, or attain, the summit. Vergens ad septentrionem, is looking or bending towards the north. The vergente die of Suetonius[4] is not midday, but the day declining,

[1] Tacit. Hist. iv. 74. [2] Urgentibus imperii fatis.—Ger. 33.

[3] Decline and Fall, c. ix. vol. i. p. 281.

[4] Vit. Otho, c. 7, and Horace, Poema . . . vergit ad imum. Tacitus frequently uses vergo in a like sense. Pharasmanes . . . vergentibus jam annis suis metuens. —Tacitus, An. b. xii. 44.

or near evening; and the vergat . . . letum of Virgil means "death is near." If the reading be vergentibus, as Gibbon says, the translation will be "the fates of the empire sinking:" the imagery, in that case, is doubtless Homeric and Virgilian. Homer, Iliad b. viii. line 93, represents Jupiter putting the fates of the Trojans and Greeks into the scales, to see which people would gain the victory, when the day sunk fatal to the Greeks, their fates having sunk to the ground. And, in like manner, in the combat, b. xxii., between Hector and Achilles, the fates of each are put in the scale, when those of Hector sink to the ground. This last place is copied by Virgil, Æneid xii. 725, who represents Jupiter putting the fates of Æneas and Turnus into the scales, that he might see which hero would fall in the approaching duel, and the inevitable death of the one whose fates sunk, is expressed by "vergat . . letum." The idea is, that the party will be defeated, or the individual slain, whose fates sink. So that vergentibus (if vergentibus be the reading,) imperii fatis must mean the fates of the empire sinking, that its ruin is near. Besides, vergentibus fatis appears to be an unusual expression among Latin writers; but certainly the two words urgeo and fatum are often joined to denote impending and inevitable ruin. Virgil says fatoque urgenti, and fatis urgetur, Æneid, ii. 653, xi. 587, and Livy, b. v. c. 36, jam urgentibus Romanam urbem fatis.]

V. Had Gibbon attended to his own representations, he would have been sensible, that when Tacitus wrote, the empire had passed the "utmost verge of prosperity," and was, in fact, rapidly declining.

He represents, and most truly, the Roman population as utterly debased, and the senate as thoroughly degraded. "During fourscore years, (says he,) excepting only the short and doubtful respite of Vespasian's reign, Rome groaned beneath an unremitting tyranny, which exterminated the ancient families of the republic, and was fatal to almost every virtue and every talent that arose in that unhappy period."[1] And again: after celebrating the praises of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, and the happiness of their subjects, he says, "they

[1] Decline and Fall, c. iii. p. 96. Compare 86. and c. v. 144.

must have often recollected the instability of a happiness which depended on the character of a single man. The fatal moment was perhaps approaching, when some licentious youth, or some jealous tyrant, would abuse, to the destruction, that absolute power, which they had exerted for the benefit, of the people. The ideal-restraint of the senate and of the laws might serve to display the virtues, but they could not correct the vices of the emperor. The military force was a blind and irresistible instrument of oppression; and the corruption of Roman manners,"[1] &c. The soldiers, he says, were influenced by "no principle," but solely by "donatives" and "liberal[2] promises;" and they had moreover, been taught "to consider the emperors as the creatures of *their* will and the instruments of *their* license."[3]

We have here, as Mr. Gibbon shows, a people and senate steeped in corruption to the lips—civil institutions destroyed—absolute power, uncontrolled either by law or opinion—an army without principle, and conscious that the treasures and fate of the empire were in their hands—and a vast overgrown kingdom, depending for its peace and security on the character of a single man. Surely such a state has long passed "the utmost verge of prosperity," and its ruin is near and inevitable.

[1] Decline and Fall, c. iii. 95. [2] Ib. v. 144. [3] c. iii. 89.

CHAPTER VI.

THE IMPERIAL SYSTEM, ETC., AND THE MISTAKES OF MR. GIBBON.

An exact Knowledge of the Imperial System, and of the Titles and Honours, conferred on the Cæsars, necessary for the Investigation of the Apocalypse—Gibbon's Contradictions and Misrepresentations—Divine Honours paid to the Emperors—the Emperors called god, and said to have a numen, or deity—Their Appellation of dominus, or lord—Roman Citizens punished servilely, and tortured by Augustus, Tiberius, Claudius, &c., and in the Reign of Nero, by Governors in their Provinces.

THE author of the "Decline and Fall" has obtained a very high character for historical accuracy and fidelity, yet his work abounds in assertions which are both inconsistent and are flatly contradicted by himself, by Tacitus, Suetonius, and other writers. It will be necessary to examine some of these assertions; for Gibbon's authority has often been too implicitly relied on; and it will be impossible to see when the sixth head of the beast falls, and the seventh appears, unless we have clear ideas, not only of the nature of the imperial power, but also of the titles and honours which were conferred on the emperors. The following passages are taken from the part of the "History of the Decline and Fall" assigned to the time of Severus, and are intended to describe the manners, habits, and form of administration of that, and not of an earlier day; and some of them are called "new maxims of imperial prerogative."

"As the government degenerated into a military despotism," &c.[1] From this passage it would appear that the government was not military and despotic till the reign of Severus; yet the historian distinctly declares that the government of Augustus was an "absolute monarchy" and a "military government:" "The system of the imperial government, as it was instituted by Augustus . . . . may be defined an absolute monarchy disguised by the forms of a commonwealth."[2] "During a long

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. i. c. 5, p. 150

[2] Ib. c. 3. p. 81.

period of two hundred and twenty years, from the establishment of this artful system (by Augustus) to the death of Commodus, the dangers inherent to a military government were, in a great measure, suspended."[1] Now as the government was all along military, and absolute or despotic, it was always a military despotism, and could not, therefore, degenerate into a military despotism: unless a thing can degenerate into itself.

"Till the reign of Severus, the virtue, and even the good sense of the emperors, had been distinguished by their zeal or affected reverence for the senate, and by a tender regard for the nice frame of civil policy instituted by Augustus. The haughty and inflexible spirit of Severus could not discover, or would not acknowledge, the advantage of preserving an intermediate power, however imaginary, between the emperor and the army. . . . . Assuming the conduct and style of a sovereign and a conqueror, he exercised, WITHOUT DISGUISE, THE WHOLE LEGISLATIVE, as well as the executive POWER."[2]

Any one not acquainted with Mr. Gibbon's method of writing history, might suppose Severus was the first emperor who exercised, without disguise, the legislative power. Yet he does not hesitate to tell us in another place, that Hadrian, who reigned long before him, exercised, "without disguise, the plenitude of legislative power." "From Augustus to Trajan, the modern Cæsars were content to promulgate their edicts in the various characters of a Roman magistrate: and in the decrees of the senate, the *epistles* and *orations* of the prince were respectfully inserted. Hadrian appears to have been the first who assumed, WITHOUT DISGUISE, the PLENITUDE OF LEGISLATIVE POWER."[3]

"Severus considered the Roman empire as his property."[4]

This was not peculiar to Severus. According to Tacitus and Josephus the empire was thought to belong to Augustus and to Vespasian. Tacitus[5] says, "After the battle of Actium people were ignorant of the republic" (ut alienæ) as belonging to another; and, therefore, when he mentions the destruction of Varus and his three legions, he does not say they were lost to

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. i. c. 3, p. 87. Compare c. 5. pp. 125, 126.
[2] Ib. c. 5. p. 151.
[3] Ib. vol. v., c. 44, p. 340.
[4] Ib. c. 5. 147.
[5] Hist. b. i. c. 1.

the republic, or to the Roman people, as in the case of the consular armies, but that they were taken from Cæsar.[1]

In like manner Josephus[2]—"And now as Vespasian was coming to Alexandria, this good news came from Rome, and at the same time came embassies from all *his own* habitable earth," ιδιας της οικουμενης.

The word ιδιας shows that the empire was considered Vespasian's own property.

Gibbon says of Severus and his times—"The victory over the senate was easy and inglorious. Every eye and every passion was directed to the supreme magistrate."

Tacitus[3] gives a like character of the Romans in the time of Augustus. "All," says he, "looked to the commands of the prince."

Gibbon[4] says—"The Greek historians of the age of the Antonines, observe, with a malicious pleasure, that although the sovereign of Rome, in compliance with an obsolete prejudice, abstained from the name of king, he possessed the full measure of regal power.

Tacitus[5] calls, and represents the Romans as calling, the imperial family, the reigning house, and reigning

Gibbon says—"In the reign of Severus the senate was filled with polished slaves from the eastern provinces, who justified personal flattery by speculative principles of servitude.[6]

It is unnecessary to go to the reign of Severus and the East for these polished slaves; they were to be found at Rome, according to Tacitus, both in and out of the senate, in the reign of Tiberius.

In the senate it was said "that the body of the republic was one, and that it ought to be governed by the mind of one"—"that princes were like gods"—that, "by the gift of the gods,

[1] Germ. c. 37. [2] Josephus' Wars, b. iv. c. 11.

[3] Omnes . . . jussa principis aspectare.—An. b. i. c. 4. This was regarded by the ancients a sure mark of the most absolute power and servitude.—Demos. De Corona, 60, 136.—Ed. Stock.

[4] 151.

[5] "domo regnatrice."—An. b. i. c 4. "regnantibus."—ii. c. 82. Compare Suet. in Tib. c. 59.

. . . "regnabit sanguine multo
Ad regnum," &c.

Trajan wore the regal dress—Βασιλικην στολην.—Dion. Cass. b. lxxviii. 29.

[6] c. 5.

the supreme pontiff was the greatest of men, that he was obnoxious neither to emulation, nor to hatred, nor to private affections."[1]

Out of the senate it was said, in the time of Augustus and Tiberius, that Cæsar[2] "reigned next to Jupiter"—that "it is not our business (the business of Romans) to consider, whom, you (Tiberius) raise above the rest, or for what reasons. The gods have given to you the supreme judgment: the glory of obedience has been left to us."[3]

Gibbon[4] says—"The imperious spirit of the first Cæsar too easily consented to assume, during his lifetime, a place among the tutelar deities of Rome. The milder temper of his successor declined so dangerous an ambition, which was never afterwards revived, except by the madness of Caligula and Domitian. Augustus permitted, indeed, some of the provincial cities to erect temples to his honour, on condition that they should associate the worship of Rome with that of the sovereign. . . . The attributes, or at least the titles, of the divinity were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian."[5]

From these two statements, one would suppose divine honours had not been paid to the emperors (except Caligula and Domitian) till the time of Diocletian and Maximian; and that they were the first to usurp the titles and honours of divinity. Whereas the fact is, that, according to the concurrent testimony of Greek and Latin historians, Augustus and other emperors (but not Tiberius) received divine honours during their lifetime—that their images were worshipped amongst the images of the gods—and that they were supposed to have a numen, or deity.

Tacitus says, or makes the Romans say, Augustus "left no honour to the gods, since he desired to be worshipped in the temples, and amongst the images of the gods, by flamens and priests.[6]"

[1] Tacit. An. b. i c. 12; iii. c. 36, 58.
[2] Horace, Odes, i. 12.
[3] An. b. vi. 8. Compare An. iii. 65.
[4] c. 3.
[5] c. 13.
[6] "Nihil deorum honoribus relictum, quum se templis et effigie numinum per flamines et sacerdotes coli."—An. b. i. c. 10. Virgil calls Augustus, god, and promises to offer on his altar many a sacrifice.—Eclogue i. Horace frequently calls him, god, deus, and divus.—Odes, b. iii. 5; iv. 5. The senate ordered libations to be poured out to Augustus in the public and private feasts, as Dion Cassius informs us, αυτῳ σπενδειν; in Horace, te prosequitur mero, worships thee by wine. After his Parthian

Tiberius, indeed, maintained against the senate and his flatterers, that he was a man and not a god; and he obstinately refused divine honours. But Nero's image was placed amongst the images of the gods, and the image was worshipped with the customary victims.[1]

When Galba was made emperor, Vespasian sent Titus to adore and worship him.[2] Now it is plain that this was not merely civil worship, or the acknowledging of his sovereignty. For it has been just seen that the emperors were worshipped with divine honours; and the emperor was supposed to have a numen or deity.

In Otho's council an immediate battle was urged with the Vitellians, because, as it was said, "fortune, and the gods, and the divinity (the numen) of Otho would be present.[3]

Pliny[4] tortured and put to death the Christians in his province, because they refused to worship the image of Trajan, which was placed amongst the images of the gods.

Hadrian[5] built and dedicated temples to his own name.

It would be easy to extend this list, and to show that the Christians might have been generally exempted from torture and death, by calling the emperor "lord," and worshipping him.

Gibbon[6] asserts that the title of dominus, or lord, was not given to, and received by the earlier, but by the later, Cæsars.

Here he is again contradicted by the concurrent testimony of history. Marcus Antoninus[7] called himself the "lord of the world." But let us go back to earlier times. In the Acts of the Apostles,[8] Festus calls Nero his "lord." And Bloomfield, in his notes on the place, cites a passage from Phædrus, to show that Tiberius was addressed by the title of dominus, or lord.

triumph, the senate decreed that he should be inscribed in the hymns equally with the gods, ἐς τε τους ὑμνους αυτον εξισον τοις Θεοις εγγραφεσθαι.—Dion, b. li. 19, 20. Augustus frequently dressed himself as Apollo, imagined there was a divine vigour in his eye, and was delighted when the person on whom he looked steadily, shrank from his gaze as from the sun in his splendour.—Sueton in August, 70, 79.

[1] Tacit. An. b. xv. c. 29.

[2] Ad venerationem et cultum.—Tacit. Hist. b. i. 10.

[3] Fortunam, et deos, et numen Othonis adesse.—Tacit. Hist. ii. 33.

[4] Letter to Trajan, cited by Lardner, vol. vii. [5] Ib. 101. [6] vol. ii. c. 13, p. 39.

[7] Godefroy Cod. Theod. b. ii. tit. 1. [8] Acts, xxv. 26. Wars, b. iv. c. 10.

Josephus says Vespasian could not, with any satisfaction, own Vitellius for his lord, (δεσποτης). Juvenal[1] calls Domitian, lord, or dominus. And Tacitus everywhere calls the imperial government a "dominatio,"[2] or tyranny, and the emperor, dominus or lord. With him Vitellius is "lord of the human race:"[3] and as Rome was designated domina rerum, mistress of the world, so Tacitus calls Vespasian "dominus rerum,"[4] "lord of the world."

Gibbon says the Romans in the times of the first emperors were exempted from torture. "The annals of tyranny,[5] from the reign of Tiberius to that of Domitian, circumstantially relate the executions of many innocent victims; but, as long as the faintest remembrance was kept alive of the national freedom and honour, the last hours of a Roman were secure from the dangers of an ignominious torture." Suetonius and Tacitus flatly contradict this account.

Augustus[6], when triumvir, tortured Q. Gallus, the Prætor, tore out his eyes with his own hands, and then ordered him to be put to death; when emperor[7], he disfranchised a Roman knight, and commanded him to be sold as a slave. If an emperor could degrade a knight to the rank of a slave, he might torture him, if he pleased. Suetonius gives a minute and very horrible account of the torturing by Tiberius, and he expressly says, he spared no one from torture.[8] Caligula[9] ordered his quæstor to be scourged by the soldiers; and he treated others with no less violence and ignominy; branding many of an honourable rank, condemning them to the mines, shutting them up in cages, like wild beasts, or cutting them in two with a saw. And Claudius[10] ordered Cn. Novius, an illustrious Roman knight, to be torn in pieces by torture.

[1] Sat. iv. [2] Annals, b i. c. 8. vi. c. 48. B. i. c. 4. xiv. 56. [3] Hist. iii. 68.
[4] ii. 78. [5] C. 17. 315, vol. ii. [6] Sueton. in Aug. 27. [7] Ib. 24.
[8] Neque tormentis neque supplicio cujusquam pepercit, 62. Compare 61 for a still more horrible act of atrocity.
[9] Suet. Cal. 26, 27.
[10] Cn. Novius insignis eques Romanus . . . tormentis dilaniabatur.—Tacit. An. b. xi. c. 22. Claudius, (Tacit. An. xii. c. 60,) invested the procurators with a power equal to his own, and above the laws, within their provinces. And in the reign of Nero, perhaps sooner, the rights of a Roman citizen had ceased to protect him from a servile punishment. Galba crucified, in Spain, a Roman citizen, who appealed in vain to the laws, and his rights as a citizen.—(Sueton. in Galba, 9.) Florus scourged and crucified many Jews, who were Roman knights.—Josephus, Wars, b. ii. c. 14, 9.

CHAPTER VII.

THE THIRD SEAL.

The Black Horse—the Balances or Zugos—the Wheat—the Barley—the Price—the Command not to hurt the Corn and the Wine.

"AND when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, come and see. And I beheld, and, lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances (zugos, a yoke). And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."

As wheat and barley, oil and wine, the produce of the earth, are important subjects of the vision, the scene of it must be the earth, which has been shown to be the Roman empire. This seal, like the preceding, denotes a state of things which begins and is developed while the empire is heathen, for no intimation has yet been given of the fall of paganism. And, since blackness is the symbol of affliction and distress, as ("atra cura,") black care, "all faces shall gather blackness,"[1]—it is a state of things pregnant with care and anxiety.

The precise character of the predicted events is now to be determined.

The Greek word zugos means a pair of balances, or a yoke for oxen, and, hence, symbolically and figuratively, an oppressive government. A pair of balances, is the translation in the authorized version, and commentators generally maintain its correctness. The price of the corn, it is said, is enormous, indicating a famine; and, corn, it is said, was weighed, in times of scarcity, instead of being measured; and this is aptly represented by the balances.

[1] Compare "Atris ignibus." "Serpentibus ignibus."—Æneid, b. iv., 384. 472.

Corn, however, was not always weighed during a dearth, and certainly the price is not a famine price.

"A penny," the denarius, was a labourer's hire for a day.—Matt. xx. A chænix, the measure of wheat or barley, was somewhat more than a man's allowance for a day; and as bread in ancient times was generally made of barley,[1] a labourer could purchase, with the hire of a day, as much of the prime necessaries of life, as would abundantly support him for four days.

Now, there can be no doubt, that food, during a famine, was formerly far dearer, and the daily allowance much less, than the price and quantity indicated by the seal, as is evident from the following facts:—When Sylla[2] besieged Athens, the medimnus, or a bushel of wheat, sold for 1000 drachms, more than thirty pounds sterling. In the typical siege of Jerusalem, Ezekiel[3] had only twenty shekels, between nine and ten ounces, of an inferior bread, every day. And,[4] when the Goths besieged Rome, "the daily allowance of three pounds of bread was reduced to one half, to one third, to nothing."

THE ZUGOS.

Archdeacon Woodhouse, in his work on the Apocalypse, has an observation to this effect: Zugos, Rev., vi. 5, cannot mean a pair of balances, because, in every other part of the scriptures, it signifies a yoke, unless the connexion, or word joined to it, necessarily determines the signification to scales; and that here, as in other parts of the Bible, it must mean a state of bondage or an oppressive government. The criticism of the Archdeacon is fully confirmed by the symbolical language of the scripture: for scales do not, I believe, occur in the Bible, as a symbol, but a zugos, or yoke, is used, both symbolically and figuratively, to denote an oppressive government, as in the following passages: [5]"Thus saith the Lord to me, make thee bonds and yokes and put them on thy neck, and send them to the king of Moab," &c. And in the petition of grievances which the Israelites presented to Rehoboam, they call his father's oppressive government a yoke (zugos), because of the heavy tributes he had exacted.

[1] John, vi., 9; 2 Kings, iv., 42. [2] Plutarch in Sylla. [3] c. 4, 10.
[4] Gib., vol. iv., p. 114. [5] Jeremiah, xxvii., 2, 3. 11; xxviii., 11. 14.

"Thy father[1] (they represent to him) made our yoke grievous; now, therefore, ease somewhat of the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee." The zugos or yoke, then, as interpreted by the symbolical and figurative language of the Old Testament, represents a tyrannical government, which oppresses and enslaves the subjects by grievous exactions.[2]

"SEE THOU HURT NOT THE OIL AND THE WINE."

Since the word translated "hurt," signifies either hurt or do wrong, it is doubted whether this part of the seal should be translated "hurt not," or do no wrong as regards, the oil and the wine. As the same word occurs again in the prophecy twice (vii. 2; ix. 4.), where it appears to be rightly rendered, "hurt," it would seem that this part of the authorized version ought to be retained. But there being no word in the original corresponding with "see," and the Greek construction being the same with that of the commandments,[3] "Thou shalt not commit adultery," "Thou shalt do no murder," "Thou shalt not steal," we shall translate, thou shalt not hurt (or thou shalt do no wrong as regards) "the oil and the wine." It is, therefore, a prohibitory law. And the power that enacts it, and makes the proclamation "a measure of wheat for a penny," and "three measures of barley for a penny," must, in the first instance, be the Roman government in its heathen state; for the earth, or the Roman empire, is the place where the vision is fulfilled, and it begins to be fulfilled before the fall of paganism. And as wheat and barley, wine and oil, are important subjects of the prophecy, the predicted miseries must be caused by measures that especially affect this most valuable portion of agricultural produce.

The symbols and language of the seal, as thus explained, are to be illustrated by corresponding events in the historical sequence of things which accelerated the fall of the empire, and

[1] 2 Chron. x. 4. Compare Is. xlvii. 6.

[2] M. Elliot (Horæ Apocalypticæ) appears to have first pointed out the scope of this part of the seal.

[3] Luke, xviii. 20; James, ii. 11.

aggravated the sufferings of her immense population; for we have seen that the Apocalypse is a prophetic system—one vision preparing another, and subsequent visions being connected with the foregoing.

The first symptom and cause of the decline and fall of the empire was the insubordination and violence of the soldiers. The second cause historians find in the exorbitant exactions it became necessary to make, in order to maintain and gratify the armies. These exactions were raised in the shape of a land-tax, which was levied chiefly from wheat and barley, wine and oil.

The civil wars breaking out at the end of Nero's reign, not only weakened and destroyed the imperial armies, dissolved their discipline, and altered their constitution, but by disclosing the secret of the empire, taught the soldiers that they could control the government, and dispose of the treasures of the state. Hence, even the best established emperors were compelled to conciliate their affection by privileges, and purchase their favour by donatives. The expenses of such a government would necessarily be very great at all times, but it is obvious that this inevitable expenditure would be increased enormously, and produce fiscal difficulties, if an emperor were unusually lavish, or if a civil war should break out, when the candidates for the throne would find it necessary to purchase the good will of their soldiers at any price. Now, it so happened, that from the accession of Vespasian to the death of Marcus Antoninus, the emperors were raised to the throne with the appearance of regularity, governed ably (except Domitian), were popular with the armies, and maintained domestic tranquillity. But on the murder of Commodus, who surpassed most men in dissolute extravagance, civil wars again broke out, when there were four competitors for the empire—one of whom, Severus, promised to every one of his soldiers £400 a-piece, if they would make him emperor. Accordingly, Severus appears to be the first who oppressed the provinces by levying large contributions; which Caracalla (his son) converted into a regular system of taxation, and thereby entailed the most frightful calamities on every class of the community.

This connexion of events, the time and the evils of these

oppressive exactions, are thus noticed by historians: "There has been much denunciation," says Michelet,[1] "of the violence and rapacity of the soldiers, who, for increase of pay, made and unmade emperors; and the cruel exactions of Severus and Caracalla, and the princes who drained the country to maintain the soldiery, have been severely blamed."

The rapacity of Severus, after his victory, is, in like manner, noticed by Gibbon,[2] who says, "The most considerable of the provincials who, without any dislike to the fortunate candidate, had obeyed the governor under whose authority they were accidentally placed, were punished by death, exile, and *especially by confiscation of their estates.* Many cities of the East were stripped of their ancient honours, and obliged to pay into the treasury of Severus four times the amount of the sum contributed by them for the service of Niger."

But from this and every other kind of direct imperial oppression, the provincials had been hitherto exempted, even in the worst of times; for, according to Tacitus,[3] "they reaped equally with the Romans the advantage of good princes, but living at a distance they were not exposed to the cruelty of the tyrants who assailed the nearest" only.

The passage has been noticed and thus expanded by Gibbon:—

"It had been, throughout, the peculiar felicity of the Romans, and in the worst of times, that the virtue of the emperors was active, and their vices indolent. Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus, visited their respective dominions; and their progress was marked by acts of wisdom and beneficence. The tyranny of Tiberius, Nero, and Domitian, who resided almost constantly at Rome, or in the adjacent villas, was confined to the senatorial and equestrian orders; but Caracalla was the common enemy of mankind. He left the capital (and he never returned to it) about a year after the murder of Geta. The rest of his reign was spent in the several provinces of the empire, particularly those of the East; and every province was, by turns, the scene of his rapine and cruelty. . . . . The most wealthy families were ruined by partial fines and confiscations, and the great body of his subjects oppressed by ingenious and aggravated taxes."[4]

[1] Michelet Hist. of France, vol. i. p 24. [2] Gib. c. 5, p. 146.
[3] Tacit. His. iv. c. 74. [4] Decline and Fall, vol. i. c. 6, pp. 163, 164.

Gibbon[1] thus explains the imposition of these taxes, and their fatal consequences:—

"The dissolute tyranny of Commodus, the civil wars occasioned by his death, and the new maxims of policy introduced by the house of Severus, had all contributed to increase the dangerous power of the army, and to obliterate the faint image of laws and liberty that was still impressed on the minds of the Romans. . . . The personal characters of the emperors, their victories, laws, follies, and fortunes, can interest us no farther than as they are connected with the general history of the decline and fall of the monarchy. Our constant attention to that great object will not suffer us to overlook a most important edict of Antoninus Caracalla, which communicated to all the free inhabitants of the empire, the name and privileges of Roman citizens. His unbounded liberality flowed not, however, from the sentiments of a generous mind; it was the sordid result of avarice; . . . . for he crushed alike every part of the empire under the weight of his iron sceptre. When all the provincials became liable to the peculiar impositions of Roman citizens, they seemed to acquire a legal exemption from the tributes which they had paid in their former condition of subjects; such were not the maxims of government adopted by Caracalla and his pretended son. The old and the new taxes were, at the same time, levied in the provinces. . . . . In the course of this history we shall be too often summoned to explain the land-tax, the capitation, and the heavy contributions of corn, wine, oil, and meat, which were exacted from the provinces, for the use of the army and the capital. . . . .

"The whole land property of the empire (without excepting the patrimony of the monarch), was the subject of ordinary taxation; and every purchaser contracted the obligations of the former proprietor. An accurate census and survey was the only equitable mode by which every citizen should be obliged to contribute for the public service; and from the well known period of the indiction, there is reason to believe that this difficult and expensive operation was repeated at the regular distance of fifteen years. The lands were measured by surveyors, who were sent into the provinces; their nature, whether arable or pasture, vineyards, or woods, was distinctly reported, and an estimate was made of their common value from the average produce of five years. . . . . A large portion of the tribute was paid in money. . . . . The remainder of the taxes, according to the proportion determined by the

[1] Decline and Fall, c. 6, pp. 190, 200.

annual indiction, was furnished in a manner still more direct and still more oppressive, in the various articles of wine or oil, corn or barley."[1]

Wine, oil, corn (wheat), and barley, are enumerated, as in the prophecy, by the historian; and the tribute was levied according to the supposed average produce of a farm for five years. A measure of wheat, then, for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny, appear to refer to the price at which wheat and barley were rated by the treasury in fixing the amount of the tax. Wheat and barley being valued at this rate, the taxation would be exorbitant; for wheat would be thirty or thirty-two shillings per cwt., and barley about ten or eleven. As "a large portion of the tribute was paid in money, and the remainder in a manner still more direct and oppressive," this system of taxation would inevitably be fatal to agriculture, and productive of the most extreme misery. And it was soon found necessary to resort to very stringent measures in order to collect the taxes, and prevent the treasury from being defrauded.

"THOU SHALT DO NO WRONG AS REGARDS, OR THOU SHALT NOT HURT, THE OIL AND THE WINE."

This prohibition will be best elucidated by considering the mode in which the impost was ascertained, levied, and evaded; and the evasion of it punished by the imperial government.

The farms[2] were measured sod by sod, the vines and trees were counted, and the amount of the rate estimated according to the average value of a farm for five years. The rate-payer, to evade the rate, feigned poverty, maimed and otherwise injured the trees. As soon as this was discovered, the tax-gatherer was authorized not only to administer an oath to, but even to torture, the proprietor and his family, if he were suspected of concealing the true state of his affairs; and prevarication was punished by death.

There is a law of the Theodosian code to this effect: "If any one shall cut down a vine with a sacrilegious hook, or

[1] Decline and Fall, c. 17, vol. ii. pp. 319, 320.

[2] Agri glebatim metiebantur, vites et arbores numerabantur.—*Lactantius.*

injure its fruitful branches, or shall craftily feign poverty, that he may evade a just census, when detected, he shall be punished capitally, and his goods shall be confiscated to the treasury."[1]

It may be objected, that as the Theodosian code was published long after the opening of the seal, its laws cannot illustrate the prophecy, because they do not prove that the frauds, which it prohibits and punishes, were practised in the third, or early in the fourth century.

It is, however, to be recollected, that the enormous evils caused by the land-tax, were suspended by the prudence of Alexander Severus, and that a considerable time will, in general, elapse, before the calamities and crimes that oppressive laws inevitably produce, are fully developed; and that special evasions must be practised before laws are made to prevent or restrain them. For laws do not anticipate, but are later than the irregularities or specific frauds they condemn and punish; because the law-giver cannot foresee, and cannot, therefore, provide against the various contrivances of human ingenuity to elude the law.

But there is sufficient evidence to prove that the rate-payers feigned, or were supposed to feign, poverty, to evade the tax, and were, therefore, punished capitally, long before the Theodosian code was compiled. Lactantius asserts the fact: "Thus, whilst Galerius," says he, "took care that no one should escape the census by counterfeiting poverty, he slew a multitude of miserable men, in violation of every right of humanity."[2]

If, indeed, we were to attend only to Gibbon's representation, it might be supposed the evils of the land tax were, in a great measure, if not wholly, suspended till some time after the accession of the Christian emperors. His account is as follows: "It was reserved for the virtue of Alexander to relieve them, in a great measure, from this intolerable grievance, by reducing the tributes (imposed by Caracalla) to a thirtieth part of the sum exacted at the time of his accession. It is impossible to conjecture the motives that induced him to spare so trifling a remnant of the public evil; but the noxious weed which had been totally eradicated, again sprung up with the most luxuriant growth,

[1] Decline and Fall, c. 17, note. [2] De Mort, Persecut. 23.

and, in the succeeding age, darkened the Roman world with its deadly shade."[1]

The subject of the land tax is again resumed (and scarcely glanced at sooner) in chapter 17, which contains the history of the administration of Constantine, and some of his successors.

"The agriculture[2] of the Roman provinces was insensibly ruined, and, in the progress of despotism, which tends to disappoint its own purposes, the emperors were obliged to derive some merit from the forgiveness of debts, or the remission of tributes, which their subjects were totally incapable of paying. According to the new division of Italy, the fertile and happy provinces of Campania, the scene of the early victories and the delicious retirements of the citizens of Rome, extended between the sea and the Apennine, from the Tyber to the Silarus. Within sixty years after the death of Constantine, and on the evidence of actual survey, an exemption was granted in favour of three hundred and thirty thousand English acres of desert and uncultivated land, which amounted to one-eighth of the surface of the whole province. As the footsteps of the barbarians had not yet been seen in Italy, the cause of this amazing desolation, which is recorded in the laws, can be ascribed only to the administration of the Roman emperors."[3]

A reader of Gibbon would naturally suppose, by comparing these statements, that the evils of the land tax were suspended for, perhaps, more than a century, and that the land tax did not become an intolerably oppressive burden till the reign of Constantine and his successors; yet, it appears from his own account of the disastrous state of the empire, from the year 250 to 265, that even then the imperial oppression was one of the two causes that had ruined agriculture, and produced a dreadful famine: "But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present, and the hope of the future, harvest."[4] And Lactantius, who lived in the third century, positively asserts, all the evils of the land tax were fully developed in the reign of Diocletian, who was made emperor A.D. 285. "Diocletian," says he, "ruined

[1] Decline and Fall c. 6, p. 200.
[2] Ib. c. 17, vol. ii. p. 321; compare 13, p. 43.
[3] Ib. c. 17, vol. ii. p. 321.
[4] Ib. vol. i. c. 10, p. 337.

the empire. By the vastness of the indictions the resources of the husbandmen were consumed—the fields were deserted, and the arable lands were changed into a wilderness."[1]

"A more terrible picture," says Michelet, "has never been drawn than that left us by Lactantius of this murderous strife between the hungry treasury and the worn-out people, who could suffer and die, but not pay. So numerous, says Lactantius, were the receivers, in comparison with the payers, and so enormous the weight of taxation, that the labourers broke down, the plains became deserts, and woods grew where the plough had been. . . . . It were impossible to number the officials who were rained on every province and town. . . Condemnations, proscriptions, and exactions were all they knew; exactions, not frequent, but perpetual, and accompanied by intolerable outrages. But the public distress, the universal mourning was when the scourge of the census came; and its takers scattering themselves in every direction, produced a general confusion, that I can only liken it to the misery of a hostile invasion, or to a town abandoned to the soldiery. The fields were measured to the very clods; the trees counted; each vine plant numbered; cattle were registered as well as men. The crack of the whip and cry of the tortured filled the air. The faithful slave was tortured for evidence against his master, the wife to depose against her husband, the son against his sire. For lack of evidence, the torture was applied to extort one's own witness against oneself; and when nature gave way they wrote down what one had never uttered. Neither old age nor sickness was exempted."

It is in these frightful calamities, beginning in the reign of Severus, that the seal has its accomplishment.

To recapitulate: A black horse appears, his rider has a yoke in his hand; a proclamation is made, "a measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny," and a command is given not to hurt the oil and the wine. It has been shown that the theatre of these events is the Roman empire—that the time is before the fall of heathenism, and in the third century—that blackness is the symbol of tribulation and dis-

[1] De Morte, Pers. 7; compare 23.

tress—that a zugos, or yoke, is the symbol of a government which oppresses the subject by exorbitant taxes—that the miseries foretold in the prophecy spring from measures affecting agricultural produce, particularly wheat, barley, oil, and wine, and that an edict, or command, is issued to prohibit hurt being done to, or wrong as regards, the oil and wine. Corresponding with these representations, we find in the sequence and connexion of history great exactions levied by the imperial government and a grievous land tax imposed, which desolated the provinces of the empire and ruined the husbandman—that wheat and barley must have been taxed at a fixed rate—that to evade the heavy taxation imposed on the produce of the land, the tax-payer feigned poverty, and injured his trees—that laws were made to punish these evasions—and that the rate-payer, his wife, his children, his family and slaves were tortured and put to death.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FOURTH SEAL.

The Sword—Famine—Pestilence—the beasts of the Earth—and the fourth of the Earth.

And when he had [1]opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. And I looked, and behold a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth"

This seal evidently represents a period of great calamity:—destruction by God's "four sore judgments, the sword and the famine, the noisome beasts and the pestilence." For, to kill with death is the same as to kill with pestilence; the Greek word thanatos, death, being often put for pesti lence.

This is the plainest, perhaps, of all the Apocalyptic prophecies. Commentators who differ widely from one another in their explanations of the Apocalypse, agree in referring the fourth seal to the series of most disastrous events which began with the death of Alexander Severus, and went far, by their combined effects, towards depopulating the empire. All the characteristics of the prediction are so clearly marked in history that any one who will take the trouble of turning over some of Gibbon's pictured pages, may easily trace the events which fulfil it.

Alexander was murdered by his soldiers A. D. 235, in his tent on the Rhine; and succeeded by Maximin, a Thracian peasant, the supposed author of his death.

The following historical illustrations are copied from Gibbon:[2]—

[1] Compare in the Sep., Ezekiel, xiv., 21, (from which this part of the seal appears to be taken.

[2] Decline and Fall, c. vii., 206, 208, 216, 223.

"The dark and sanguinary soul of the tyrant (Maximin) was open to every suspicion against those among his subjects distinguished by birth and merit. Italy and the whole empire were infested with innumerable spies and informers . . . . Confiscation, exile or simple death were esteemed uncommon instances of lenity. . . . His camp, occasionally removed from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Danube, was the seat of a stern despotism which trampled on every principle of law, and justice, and was supported by the avowed power of the sword. . . . The tyrant's avarice, stimulated by the insatiate desires of the soldiers, at length attacked the public property. Every city of the empire was possessed of an independent revenue, destined to purchase corn for the multitude, and to supply the expenses of the games and entertainments. By a single act of authority, the whole mass of wealth was at once confiscated for the use of the treasury. The temples were stripped of their most valuable offerings of gold and silver, and the statues of gods, heroes, and emperors were melted down and coined into money. These impious orders could not be executed without tumult and massacres, as in many places the people chose rather to die in the defence of their altars, than to behold, in the midst of peace, their cities exposed to the cruelty and rapine of war."

A. D. 237, Africa revolted, and the two Gordians, the father and son, were proclaimed emperors. The rebellion was quickly suppressed by their defeat and death. "Africa," says Gibbon, "was exposed to the rapacious cruelty of a slave, obliged to satisfy his unrelenting master with a large amount of blood and treasure."

Maximus, Balbinus, and a third Gordian were then elected emperors.

Maximin, as soon as the tidings of the revolt of Rome and the senate reached him, marched into Italy and besieged Aquileia; where he and his son, whom he had associated in the empire, were murdered by their own soldiers.

Maximus and Balbinus soon met a like fate.

The third Gordian was murdered, after a short reign, in his nineteenth year, by (it is supposed) Philip the Arabian, who succeeded him, A. D. 244.

A. D. 249, the troops in Mæsia revolted: Decius, who was sent to quell the revolt, accepted from them the purple; met and defeated his old master, who fell in the battle, or was killed a few days afterwards in Verona.

It was in Philip's reign the Goths first passed the Danube; and as they and the other Barbaric nations, who invaded the empire will often come before us in the course of this work, a brief account of their origin and progress shall occasionally be given from the historian of the "Decline and Fall."

The GOTHS are supposed to have crossed the Baltic, from Sweden, their original seat, at an early period, and to have settled in Pomerania and Prussia. Gibbon says:—

"As early as the Christian era, and as late as the age of the Antonines, the Goths were established towards the mouth of the Vistula, and in the fertile provinces where the commercial cities of Thorn, Elbing, Koningsberg, and Dantzick, were long afterward founded. . . . In the age of the Antonines, the Goths were still seated in Prussia. About the reign of Alexander Severus, the Roman province of Dacia had already experienced their proximity by frequent and destructive inroads. In this interval, therefore, of about seventy years, we must place the second migration of the Goths from the Baltic to the Euxine. . . . The Scythian hordes which, towards the east, bordered on the new settlements of the Goths, presented nothing to their arms, except the doubtful chance of an unprofitable victory. But the prospect of the Roman territories was far more alluring; and the fields of Dacia were covered with rich harvests, sown by the hands of an industrious, and exposed to be gathered by those of a warlike, people. It is probable that the conquests of Trajan,[1] maintained by his successors, less for any real advantage than for ideal dignity, had contributed to weaken the empire on that side. The new and unsettled province of Dacia was neither strong enough to resist, nor rich enough to satiate, the rapaciousness of the barbarians. As long as the remote banks of the Niester were considered as the boundary of the Roman power, the fortifications of the Lower Danube were more carelessly guarded; and the inhabitants of Mæsia lived in supine security, fondly conceiving themselves at an inaccessible distance from any barbarian invaders. The irruption of the Goths, in the reign of Philip, fatally convinced them of their mistake. The king, or leader, of that fierce nation, traversed with contempt the province of Dacia, and passed both the Niester and the Danube without encountering any opposition capable of retarding his progress. . . . The various multitude of the barbarians appeared, at length, under the walls of Marcianopolis, a city built by Trajan in honour of his sister, at that time the capital of the second

[1] *See Note* B at the end of the vol.

Mæsia. The inhabitants consented to ransom their lives and property, by the payment of a large sum of money, and the invaders retreated back into their deserts, animated rather than satisfied with the first success of their arms against an opulent but feeble country. Intelligence was soon transmitted to the emperor, that Cniva, king of the Goths, had passed the Danube a second time with more considerable forces; that his numerous detachments scattered devastation over the province of Mæsia," &c.[1]

Decius immediately marched against the Goths, was defeated, and his camp taken and pillaged. Philippopolis was then stormed, and "a hundred thousand persons are reported to have been massacred in the sack of that great city."

The Romans were again, October, A.D. 251, defeated in a second battle, at an obscure town of Mæsia, called Forum Trebonii; when Decius and his son, whom "he had associated in the honours of the purple," were both slain.

Their successor, Gallus, purchased "a peace from the Goths by the payment of an annual tribute." He and his son Volusianus were murdered in May, A.D. 253. His successor, Æmilianus, met the same fate before the end of the year.

Valerian next "obtained possession of the throne," and "immediately invested with the supreme honours his son Gallienus." "The joint government of the father and of the son subsisted about seven years, and the sole administration of Gallienus continued about eight years. But the whole period was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity. The Roman empire was at one and the same time, and on every side, attacked by the blind fury of foreign invaders, and the wild ambition of domestic usurpers."[2] The most dangerous enemies of Rome during the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus were, I. the Franks, II. the Alemanni, III. The Goths, IV. the Persians.[3]

I. THE FRANKS.

"As the posterity of the Franks," says Gibbon, "composes one of the greatest and most enlightened nations of Europe, the powers of learning and ingenuity have been exhausted in the discovery of their unlet-

[1] Decline and Fall, c. x.

[2] *See Note* C, at the end of the vol.

[3] Decline and Fall, vol. i. c. x, p. 305.

tered ancestors. . . . At length the most rational critics, rejecting the fictitious emigrations of ideal conquerors, have acquiesced in a sentiment whose simplicity persuades us of its truth. They suppose that about the year 240, a new confederacy was formed under the name of Franks, by the old inhabitants of the Lower Rhine and the Weser. . . . The Rhine, though dignified with the title of safeguard of the provinces, was an imperfect barrier against the daring spirit of enterprise with which the Franks were actuated. Their rapid devastations stretched from the river to the foot of the Pyrennees; nor were they stopped by those mountains. Spain, which had never dreaded, was unable to resist, the inroads of the Germans. During twelve years, the greatest part of the reign of Gallienus, that opulent country was the theatre of unequal and destructive hostilities. Tarragona, the flourishing capital of a peaceful province, was sacked and almost destroyed; and so late as the days of Orosius, who wrote in the fifth century, wretched cottages, scattered amidst the ruins of magnificent cities, still recorded the rage of the barbarians. When the exhausted country no longer supplied a variety of plunder, the Franks seized upon some vessels in the ports of Spain, and transported themselves into Mauritania. The distant province was astonished with the fury of these barbarians, who seemed to fall from a new world, as their name, manners, and complexion, were equally unknown on the coast of Africa."[1]

II. THE ALEMANNI.

"The wide-extended name of the Suevi filled the interior countries of Germany, from the banks of the Oder to those of the Danube. . . . In the reign of the emperor Caracalla, an innumerable swarm of Suevi appeared on the banks of the Mein, and in the neighbourhood of the Roman provinces, in quest either of food, of plunder, or of glory. The hasty army of volunteers gradually coalesced into a great and permanent nation; and, as it was composed from so many different tribes, assumed the name of Alemanni, or All-men; to denote at once their various lineage and their common bravery. . . . This warlike people of Germans had been astonished by the immense preparations of Alexander Severus; they were dismayed by the arms of his successor—a barbarian equal in valour and fierceness to themselves. But still hovering on the frontiers of the empire, they increased the general disorder that ensued after the death of Decius. They inflicted severe wounds on the rich provinces of Gaul; they

[1] Decline and Fall, c. x. p. 308.

were the first who removed the veil that covered the feeble majesty of Italy. A numerous body of Alemanni penetrated across the Danube and through the Rhætian Alps into the plains of Lombardy, advanced as far ar Ravenna, and displayed the victorious banners of barbarians almost in sight of Rome. . . . The Alemanni, astonished with the sudden appearance of an army more numerous than their own, retired into Germany laden with spoil; and their retreat was esteemed as a victory by the unwarlike Romans."

III. THE GOTHS.

"We have already," says Gibbon, "traced the emigration of the Goths from Scandinavia, or at least from Prussia, to the mouths of the Borysthenes, and have followed their victorious arms from the Borysthenes to the Danube. . . . But the great stream of Gothic hostilities was directed into a very different channel. The Goths, in their new settlement of the Ukraine, soon became masters of the northern coasts of the Euxine: to the south of that inland sea were settled the soft and wealthy provinces of Asia Minor, which possessed all that could attract and nothing that could resist the barbarian conqueror."

They soon became masters of a fleet which gave them the command of the Euxine. They took and destroyed Pityus, the utmost limit of the Roman provinces. They next stormed Trebizond. A general massacre of the people ensued, and the most holy temples and most splendid edifices were involved in common destruction. The booty that fell into the hands of the Goths was immense; the wealth of the adjacent countries had been deposited in Trebizond, as in a secure place of refuge. The number of captives was incredible, as the victorious barbarians ranged without opposition through the extensive provinces of Pontus.

"The second expedition of the Goths," says Gibbon, "was undertaken with greater powers of men and ships; but they steered a different course, and, disdaining the exhausted provinces, followed the western coast of the Euxine, passed before the wide mouths of the Borysthenes, the Niester, and the Danube, increasing their fleet by the capture of a great number of fishing-barks, they approached the narrow outlet through which the Euxine pours its waters into the Mediterranean, and divides the continents of Europe and Asia. Chalcedon, most plentifully stored with arms and money, and Nicomedia, once the capital of the kings of Bithynia, were

taken and pillaged. Nice, Prusa, Apæmæa, Cius, cities that had sometime rivalled or imitated the splendour of Nicomedia, were involved in the same calamity, which in a few weeks raged without control over the whole province of Bithynia.

In a third expedition the Goths, "impatient of the limits of the Euxine, steered their destructive course from the Cimmerian to the Thracian Bosphorus. . . . . Their landing on the little island of Cyzicus was attendedwith the ruin of that ancient and noble city. From thence, issuing through the narrow passage of the Hellespont, they pursued their winding navigation amidst the numerous islands scattered over the Archipelago, or the Ægean Sea. . . . At length the Gothic fleet anchored in the port of the Piræus, five miles distant from Athens. . . . The barbarians became masters of the native seat of the muses and of the arts. . . . A general conflagration blazed out at the same time in every district of Greece. Thebes and Argos, Corinth and Sparta, which had formerly waged such memorable wars against each other, were now unable to bring an army into the field, or even to defend their ruined fortifications. The rage of war, both by land and by sea, spread from the eastern point of Sunium to the western coast of Epirus. The Goths had already advanced within sight of Italy, when the approach of such imminent danger awakened Gallienus from his dream of pleasure. The emperor appeared in arms; and his presence seems to have checked the ardour and divided the strength of the army. Naulobatus, a chief of the Heruli, accepted an honourable capitulation, entered with a large body of his countrymen into the service of Rome, and was invested with the ornaments of the consular dignity, which had never before been profaned by the hands of a barbarian. Great numbers of the Goths, disgusted with the perils and hardships of a tedious voyage, broke into Mæsia, with a design of forcing their way over the Danube to their settlements in the Ukraine. . . . The small remainder of this destroying host returned on board their vessels; and, measuring back their way through the Hellespont and the Bosphorus, ravaged in their passage the shores of Troy, whose fame, immortalized by Homer, will probably survive the memory of the Gothic conquests.

"In the general calamities of mankind, the death of an individual however exalted, the ruin of an edifice however famous, are passed over with careless inattention. Yet we cannot forget the temple of Diana at Ephesus, after having arisen with increasing splendour from seven repeated misfortunes, was finally burnt by the Goths in their third naval invasion. The arts of Greece and the wealth of Asia had conspired to erect that sacred and magnificent structure. . . . . Successive empires, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman, had revered its

sanctity and enriched its splendour. But the rude savages of the Baltic were destitute of a taste for the elegant arts, and they despised the ideal terrors of a foreign superstition."[1]

IV. THE PERSIANS.

A.D. 260, Valerian, the Roman emperor, was defeated and taken prisoner by Sapor, king of Persia. The Persians immediately crossed the Euphrates and devastated Syria, Cilicia, and Cappadocia.

"So rapid," says Gibbon, "were the motions of the Persian cavalry that, if we may credit a very judicious historian, the city of Antioch was surprised when the idle multitude was fondly gazing on the amusements of the theatre. The splendid buildings of Antioch, private as well as public, were either pillaged or destroyed; and the numerous inhabitants were put to the sword or led away into captivity. The tide of devastation was stopped for a moment by the resolution of the high priest of Emesa. Arrayed in his sacerdotal robes, he appeared at the head of a great body of frantic peasants, armed only with slings, and defended his god and his property from the sacrilegious hands of the followers of Zoroaster. But the ruin of Tarsus, and of many other cities, furnishes a melancholy proof, that, except in this singular instance, the conquests of Syria and Cilicia scarcely interrupted the progress of the Persian armies. . . . . Cæsarea, the capital of Cappadocia, supposed to contain four hundred thousand inhabitants, was betrayed, and many thousand of its citizens were involved in a general massacre. Sapor despaired of having any permanent settlement in the empire, and sought only to leave behind him a wasted desert, whilst he transported into Persia the people and the treasures of the provinces."[2]

Whilst the empire was thus assailed by the barbarians from without, it was torn to pieces by internal discord and civil wars. During the reign of Gallienus there were nineteen pretenders to the throne, and of these nineteen pretenders "there was not one who enjoyed a life of peace, or a natural death."[3]

So much for the sword. But four characters of the seal yet remain to be illustrated, famine, pestilence, the beasts of the earth, and the fourth part of the earth.

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. i. c. x. pp. 311-320.
[2] Ibid. c. x. pp. 323, 325. [3] Ib. p. 332.

FAMINE AND PESTILENCE.

"Our habits of thinking," says Gibbon,[1] "so fondly connect the order of the universe with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of history has been decorated with inundations, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkness, and a crowd of prodigies, fictitious or exaggerated. But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present and the hope of the future harvests. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effects of scarcity and unwholesome food. Other causes, however, must have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year 250 to the year 265, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family, of the Roman empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily in Rome; and many towns that had escaped the hands of the barbarians were entirely depopulated."

THE BEASTS OF THE EARTH.

An increase of the beasts of the earth is the natural consequence of depopulation. And "we read in history," says Bishop Newton, in his exposition of the seal, that "five hundred wolves together entered into a city, which was deserted by its inhabitants, and where the young Maximin chanced to be. It is well known that the heathens maliciously ascribed all public calamities to the Christians, and among them we find objected the wars, which they were obliged to wage with lions and wild beasts, as we may collect from Arnobius, who wrote soon after this time."

This is the interpretation which has been usually given of this part of the seal; but something more appears to be implied, as shall be presently shown.

"AND POWER WAS GIVEN TO THEM OVER A FOURTH PART OF THE EARTH."

A considerable difficulty has arisen as to the meaning of the fourth part of the earth. Without distracting the reader with various explanations, I shall give that which seems the true one. The Greek preposition επι, translated "over," frequently signifies

[1] Decline and Fall, c. x. p. 337.

"as far as," or "unto."—Acts, x. 16; xi. 10. Rev. xxi. 16.[1] The word translated "earth," often means its inhabitants, as in the Revelation, c. xiii., xiv., and in many other parts of the scriptures. The fourth part of the earth will, therefore, mean a fourth of the inhabitants of the earth or empire. The prophecy, then, foretells a vast decrease of population; which is implied by the beasts increasing in such numbers as to prove formidable and destructive to the surviving inhabitants of a country. For in scripture the multiplying of the beasts of the field against man, is characteristic of a thinly peopled and desolate country. "I will not drive them out (the Hivite, the Canaanite, &c.) from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beasts of the field multiply against thee."—Exodus, xxiii. 29.[2]

A vast diminution of the inhabitants of the empire is, therefore, a characteristic of the seal; and "Diminution of the human species" is, according to the historian of the Decline and Fall, one of the characters of these gloomy times. Gibbon writes as follows:—

"Diminution of the human species."

"We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use, perhaps, in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of forty and seventy had been equal to the whole sum of claimants, from fourteen to four score years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus. Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves, that above half the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might suspect that war, pestilence, and famine, had consumed in a few years the moiety of the human species."[3]

This analogy, however, cannot be extended to the other provinces; the Alexandrians being always noted for turbulence,

[1] επι σταδιων, many read (Poole Syn.), and Schleusner inclines to, σταδιους. But may there not be an elipsis, as in Homer, επι δουρος (οσον διαστημα)?

[2] We are directed to this passage by Bloomfield. Greek Testament.

[3] Gibbon, c. x. p. 337.

and a furious civil war raging at this time in Alexandria nearly twelve years, which reduced a great part of the city to ruin.

"After the captivity of Valerian, and the insolence of his son had relaxed the authority of the law, the Alexandrians abandoned themselves to the ungoverned rage of their passions, and their unhappy country was the theatre of a civil war, which continued (with a few short suspicious truces) above twelve years. All intercourse was cut off between the several quarters of the afflicted city; every street was polluted with blood; every building of strength converted into a citadel; nor did the tumult subside till a considerable part of Alexandria was irretrievably ruined. The spacious and magnificent district of Bruchion, with its palaces and museum, the residence of the kings and philosophers, is described, above a century afterwards, as already reduced to its present state of dreary solitude."

But, although the analogy of Alexandria cannot be extended to the whole empire (it being a city peculiarly circumstanced), yet a "Diminution of the human species" is clearly an Apocalyptic and historical character of this disastrous period; and if one city, in which war raged for twelve years, lost one half of its population, it is highly probable a fourth of the inhabitants of the empire perished by the combined effects of the sword, the pestilence, famine, and the beasts of the earth.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIFTH SEAL.

The scene of the Vision—the Souls under the Altar—the Heathen Persecutions.

"AND when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: and they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, Holy and True, dost thou not judge us, and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

The persecution of the Christians by heathen Rome is generally admitted to be the subject of this vision: but before we proceed to the historical illustration, its imagery must be explained.

The place where St. John saw the Apocalypse was the temple[1] in heaven; which was the model of the tabernacle made by Moses; for God commanded him to construct it exactly after the heavenly pattern: [2]"See (saith He) that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." In the Mosaic tabernacle there was the golden altar of burnt incense within the house, before the veil; and, in the court, before the door of the tabernacle, the altar of burnt sacrifice; the apostle, therefore, sees before him (the earthly tabernacle being made exactly after the pattern of the heavenly) a court with its altar of burnt sacrifice, and a temple with the golden altar of burnt incense, corresponding with the court and altars of the Mosaic tabernacle. The blood (which is the life) of the

[1] Rev. iv., 2. 8, compare Isaiah, vi. 1.
[2] Exod. xxv., 40; Heb. viii., 5; ix., 9. 12. 23, 24.

victims was poured out at the foot of the altar of burnt offering. And it is in allusion to this rite,[1] that the souls of the martyrs are seen at the base of the altar; for the martyrs being regarded as so many sacrifices, their souls are seen in the same relative place in the court of the heavenly temple, as the blood of the sacrifices in the court of the earthly.

"And they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O God, Holy and True, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood."

The cry for vengeance is generally thought to be an allusion to the remarkable passage of Genesis, where God says to Cain, "the voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground." It is undoubtedly a clear intimation that the blood of the saints which had been so iniquitously poured out, would not be unavenged.[2]

"And white robes (the symbol of their justification) were given to every one of them. And it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." Here is a prediction that the people of God would be persecuted long after the events of this seal, and put to death for their testimony to Jesus.

We shall now proceed to the historical illustration of the prophecy.

For nearly two centuries and a-half, Christianity was cruelly persecuted by the Roman government, and, consequently, the early Christians were exposed to the most dreadful sufferings. The night before His crucifixion, the Lord said to His disciples: "These[3] things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the

[1] In a highly symbolical prophecy conveyed almost entirely in the imagery of the Mosaic service and Jewish prophets, sacrificial allusions, as might be expected, are frequent, yet perhaps not more so than in many other parts of Scripture. They abound, for example, in the writings of the Apostle Paul. Contemplating his own martyrdom (which he suffered in the reign of Nero), he thus writes to the Philippians: "I am ready to be offered (poured out as a libation) upon the sacrifice and service of your faith."—Phil. ii. 17. In this passage the faith of the apostle's Gentile converts is regarded as the sacrifice which is offered to the Lord, and his own blood, the drink-offering, poured out on the sacrifice. (Exod. xxix. 40.) And shortly before his death, he again writes in the same sacrificial strain: "I am now ready to be offered (poured out), and the time of my departure is at hand."—2 Tim. iv. 6.

[2] Luke, xviii., 3, &c.

[3] John, xvi. 1, 2.

time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." It is known, from the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, that nearly as soon as the Christian religion was preached, the prophecy began to be fulfilled; for both those who preached and those who embraced it, were every where spoken against and persecuted. These persecutions were, however, in the beginning instigated by the Jews, or proceeded only from tumultuary acts of popular violence; and Christians, as such, were not molested by the imperial government till the reign of Nero. But, Rome having been burnt, A.D. 64, and the emperor being justly suspected of setting it on fire, the tyrant, to divert the public odium from himself, charged the Christians with the atrocious deed.

The Christians at Rome were already, as Tacitus informs us, "a vast multitude (ingens multitudo); and many of them being taken, some were put to death with the most exquisite tortures, others covered with the skins of wild beasts were torn to pieces by dogs; others were crucified, or wrapped in pitched garments, to be set on fire, and when the day closed, were used for torches to illuminate the darkness. Nero lent his gardens for the entertainment, and gave a horse race on the occasion, and was present, mingling sometimes with the crowd in the dress of a charioteer, and sometimes sitting on his chariot."[1]

Nero killed himself, A.D. 68, and the empire being immediately involved in the flames of the great civil war, the Romans were too busy to harass the Christians, who do not appear to have been persecuted again by the imperial government till the end of Domitian's reign, when some edicts were published against them. But this odious tyrant being cut off by domestic treason, A.D. 96, and his acts repealed by his successor, Nerva, they had rest during the next ten or eleven years.

We have already had occasion to observe that Pliny, about the year 106 or 107, found paganism nearly ruined in his province of Bithynia. The damage that it had received was attributed with greater justice doubtless, to the disciples of the Lord than to the burning of Rome, and many were brought

[1] Tacit. An. xv. 44. Tacitus cooly observes they were punished in this horrid manner, not because "they were convicted of the fire, but of hating the human race."

before Pliny accused of the crime of Christianity. The prisoners were examined, then threatened, and if they did not renounce their religion, sentenced to death and executed. Others were again brought before him charged with the same crime; they were ordered to sacrifice, by wine and frankincense, to Trajan's image, which was placed among the images of the gods, and to curse Christ. Such as refused were tortured, put to death, or sent to Rome to be judged by the emperor. This, as Pliny, in an official despatch, informs his master, was the way he dealt with the Christians who had been brought before his tribunal; but as they were so numerous in the province, that the temples were forsaken, the sacred solemnities, neglected, scarcely a purchaser to be found for a victim, and as many of every age and rank, and of each sex, were likely to be accused, he was greatly perplexed, and he therefore applied to the emperor for instructions by which his future proceedings might be regulated.

Trajan, in his answer, approves of Pliny's conduct, and orders, that all who were openly accused of Christianity, convicted in a court of law, and would not repent, should be put to death; but that no secret informations should be received against any.[1]

The observance of this edict, iniquitous as it was, would have mitigated considerably the sufferings of the Christians, because they would have been thereby taken out of the hands of the priests and people, and no accusation could have been brought or received against them except in a court of law, with their accusers face to face; but it was soon neglected or evaded. For in a short time afterward, in the reign of Trajan's successor,

"The populace," says Mosheim, "set in motion by their priests, demanded of their magistrates, with one voice during the public games, the destruction of the Christians; and the magistrates, fearing that a sedition might be the consequence of despising or opposing these popular clamours, were too much disposed to indulge them in their request. During these commotions, Serenus Granianus, proconsul of Asia, represented to the emperor how barbarous and unjust it was to sacrifice to

[1] *See Note* D at the end of the vol.

the fury of a lawless multitude persons who had been convicted of no crime. Nor was his wise and equitable remonstrance without effect; for Adrian (Trajan's successor), by an edict issued out to these magistrates, prohibited the putting of Christians to death unless they were regularly accused and convicted of crimes committed against the laws; and this edict appears to have been a solemn renewal of the edict of Trajan."[1]

From this time, that is, during the remainder of Adrian's reign, and the greater part of the reign of Antoninus, who protected them, Christians were exposed only to occasional acts of popular violence until the accession of Marcus Antoninus; when, under the auspices of this celebrated philosopher, the persecutions were again revived, and carried on systematically, and with savage ferocity.

Mosheim, in his account of this period, says:—

"The Christians were put to the most cruel tortures, and were condemned to meet death in the most barbarous forms. . . . Among these victims there were many men of illustrious piety, and some of eminent learning and abilities, such as the holy and venerable Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, and Justin Martyr, so deservedly renowned for his erudition and philosophy. Many churches, particularly those of Lyons and Vienne, were almost entirely destroyed during this violent persecution, which raged in the year 177, and will be an indelible stain upon the memory of the prince by whose order it was carried on."[2]

In an epistle of the Church of Smyrna an account is given of the sufferings of some of the martyrs in those terrible times:—

. . . . "Doubtless their magnanimity, their patience, and their love of the Lord deserve the admiration of every one; who though torn with whips till the frame and structure of their bodies were laid open even to their veins and arteries, yet meekly endured; so that those who stood around pitied them and lamented. . . . In like manner those who were condemned to the wild beasts underwent for a time cruel torments, being placed under shells of sea-fish, and exposed to various other tortures, that if possible the infernal tyrant, by an uninterrupted series of suffering,

[1] Ecc. His. cent. ii. c. ii.

[2] Mosheim, ib. cent. ii. c. ii.

might tempt them to deny their Master. Much did Satan contend against them; but, thanks to God, without effect against them all."[1]

Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, who was above eighty-six years of age, was offered his life if he would "reproach Christ," and swear by the fortunes of Cæsar, or say "Lord Cæsar," and "sacrifice." On his refusal he was condemned to be burned.

The following passages are taken from "The Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons to the Brethren in Asia and Phrygia," which gives an account of their sufferings:—

"We are not competent to describe with accuracy, nor is it in our power to express, the greatness of the afflictions sustained here by the saints, the intense animosity of the heathen against them, and the complicated sufferings of the blessed martyrs. The grand enemy assaulted us with all his might. . . . . Christians were absolutely prohibited from appearing in any houses except their own, in baths, in the markets, or in any public place whatever. . . . . The holy martyrs now sustained tortures which exceed the powers of description: Satan labouring, by means of these tortures, to extort something slanderous against Christianity. . . . . Christians were thrust into the most noisome parts of the prison: their feet were distended in a wooden trunk even to the fifth hole; and in this situation they suffered all the indignities which diabolical malice could inflict. Hence many of them were suffocated in prison," &c.[2]

The fifth imperial persecution commenced A. D. 202, in the reign of Severus. Tertullian, quoted by Lardner, and Mosheim, say, "the Christians were crucified, being hung upon stakes, burned alive, thrown to wild beasts, condemned to the mines, banished into desolate islands."

After this storm the church had rest until the persecution was renewed by Maximin.[3] "During his reign the Christians suffered in the most barbarous manner; for though the edict of this tyrant extended only to bishops and leaders of Christian churches, yet its shocking effects reached much further; as it animated the heathen priests, the magistrates, and the multitude against the

[1] Milner, His. C. cent. ii. c. v. [2] Ib. cent. ii. c. v.
[3] Mosheim, cent. ii. c. ii.

Christians of every rank and order." But a still more fearful imperial persecution burst out on the accession of Deceus. [1] "The management of this seems to have been the whole employment of the magistrates. Swords, wild beasts, wheels for stretching human bodies, and talons of iron to tear them; these were at this time the instruments of pagan vengeance."

Pionius, a presbyter of Smyrna, was ordered to sacrifice; he refused, and was threatened with torture and death.

[2] "The people who surrounded him, said with Polemon, 'Believe us, Pionius, your probity and wisdom make us deem you worthy to live; and life is sweet.' 'I know,' says the martyr, 'life is pleasing, but I mean that eternal life which I aspire after; I do not, with a contemptuous spirit, reject the good things of this life; but I prefer something that is infinitely better; I thank you for your expression of kindness.' . . . A few days after, the proconsul Quintilian returned to Smyrna and examined Pionius. He then tried both torture and persuasions in vain; and at length, enraged at his obstinacy, he sentenced him to be burnt alive. The martyr went cheerfully to the place of execution, and thanked God, who had preserved his body pure from idolatry. After he was stretched and nailed to the wood, the executioner said to him, 'Change your mind, and the nails shall be taken out.' 'I have felt them,' answered Pionius: he then remained thoughtful for a time; afterward he said, 'I hasten, O Lord, that I may sooner be partaker of the resurrection.' . . . . Pionius remained motionless, absorbed in prayer, while the fire was consuming him. At length opening his eyes, and looking cheerfully on the fire, he said, 'Amen.' His last words were, 'Lord, receive my soul.'"[3]

Gallus succeeded Decius, who was slain in the Gothic war, A.D. 251. "Gallus,[4] says Eusebius, did not attend to the fate of Decius, nor consider what was his ruin; but stumbled upon the same stone which lay before his eyes. When his empire was in a happy state, and all things succeeded according to his wishes, he persecuted those truly holy men, who prayed to God for his health and prosperity; and with them drove away those prayers which they offered up for him."

Gallus was soon cut off, and succeeded, A.D. 253, by Valerian.

[1] Milner, cent. iii., c. xi. [2] Ib. [3] Ib.
[4] Lardner's Heathen Testimonies, vol. vii., p. 360.

For the first four years of his reign he was favourable to the Christians; but in 257, he issued an edict against them to the following effect:—"That bishops, presbyters, and deacons should be put to death without delay; that senators and persons of quality, and Roman knights, should be deprived of their dignity and their goods; if after that they persist in being Christians, they should be beheaded; that ladies of quality should be deprived of their goods, and sent into exile; that the emperor's freed-men, who have confessed, or shall hereafter confess, shall lose their goods, which are to be seized by the treasury; and that they are to be sent chained to the emperor's estate, and that they be put in the list of slaves to work there."[1]

The tenth and greatest of the heathen persecutions began A. D. 303, and continued ten years. It was instigated by the priests, and its avowed object was to extirpate the Christian religion.[2]

The following account of the state of the empire, and the causes of this dreadful persecution, are taken from Mosheim:—

"In the beginning of the fourth century, the Roman empire was under the dominion of four chiefs, of whom two, Diocletian and Maximian Herculius, were of superior dignity, and were distinguished each by the title of Augustus; while the other two, Constantius Chlorus and Maximinus Galerius, were in a certain degree of subordination to the former, and were honoured with the appellation of Cæsars. Under these four emperors, the church enjoyed an agreeable calm. Diocletian, though much addicted to superstition, did not, however, entertain any aversion to the Christians; and Constantius Chlorus, who following the dictates of right reason alone in the worship of the Deity, had abandoned the absurdities of polytheism, and treated them with condescension and benevolence. This alarmed the pagan priests, whose interests were so closely connected with the continuance of the ancient superstition, and who apprehended, not without reason, that to their great detriment the Christian religion would become daily more universal and triumphant

[1] Lardner, vol. vii. p. 368.

[2] There are two inscriptions in Gruter relating to it, in which it is intimated that in the times of Dioclesian and Maximian Herculius and Galerius, the name of the Christians who had overthrown the republic was extirpated. And again, "That the superstition of the Christians was everywhere extirpated, and the worship of the gods restored."—Lardner's Works, 10 vols., vol. vii., p. 548.

throughout the empire. Under these anxious fears of the downfal of their authority, they addressed themselves to Diocletian, whom they knew to be of a timorous and credulous disposition, and by fictitious oracles, and other such perfidious stratagems, endeavoured to engage him to persecute the Christians.

"In the year 303, when the emperor (Diocletian) was at Nicomedia, an order was obtained from him to pull down the churches of the Christians, to burn all their books and writings, and to take from them all their civil rights and privileges, and render them incapable of any honours or civil promotion. This first edict, though rigorous and severe, extended not to the lives of the Christians, for Diocletian was extremely averse to slaughter and bloodshed; it was, however, destructive to many of them, particularly to those who refused to deliver the sacred books into the hands of the magistrates. Many Christians, therefore, among them several bishops and presbyters, seeing the consequences of this refusal, delivered up all the religious books, and other sacred things that were in their possession, in order to save their lives. This conduct was highly condemned by the most steady and resolute Christians, who looked upon this compliance as sacrilegious, and branded those who were guilty of it with the ignominious appellation of traditors."

Not long after the publication of this first edict against the Christians, a fire broke out, at two different times, in the palace of Nicomedia, where Galerius lodged with Diocletian. The Christians (as in the reign of Nero) were accused of being the authors of it.

"Diocletian, by a new edict, ordered all the bishops and ministers of the Christian church to be cast into prison. Nor did his inhuman violence end here; for a third edict was issued out, by which it was ordered, that all sorts of torments should be employed, and the most insupportable punishments invented, to force these venerable captives to renounce their profession, by sacrificing to the heathen gods; for it was hoped, that, if the bishops and doctors of the church could be brought to yield, that their respective flocks would be easily induced to follow their example. An immense number of persons, illustriously distinguished by their piety and learning, became the victims of this cruel stratagem, throughout the whole Roman empire, Gaul excepted, which was under the mild and equitable dominion of Constantius Chlorus. Some were punished in such a shameful manner, as the rules of decency oblige us to pass in silence; some were put to death after having had their constancy tried by tedious

and inexpressible tortures; and some were sent to the mines to draw out the remains of a miserable life in poverty and bondage.'

"In the second year of this horrible persecution, the 304th of the Christian era, a fourth edict was published by Diocletian, at the instigation of Galerius, and the other inveterate enemies of the Christian name. By it the magistrates were ordered and commissioned to force all Christians, without distinction of rank or sex, to sacrifice to the gods, and were authorized to employ all sorts of torments, in order to drive them to this act of apostacy. The diligence and zeal of the Roman magistrates, in the execution of this inhuman edict, had like to have proved fatal to the Christian cause."[1]

The Diocletian persecution ended in the ruin of its authors, the fall of heathenism, and of all its great supporters. These events, we shall now proceed to show, are the subject of the next seal.

[1] *See* note E at the end of the vol.

CHAPTER X.

THE SIXTH SEAL.

The language of the Seal—its meaning—the scope of the Prophecy—the time and place of the Predicted Events—the dismay of the enemies of the Lord.

"AND I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind: and the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places: and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of His wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

This seal plainly foretells a great judgment and convulsion, but it is disputed, whether the language is symbolical or literal; whether a convulsion of nature and the general judgment are predicted, or a revolution in a state, causing the ruin of princes and nobles, and filling the enemies of religion with a dreadful fear of the Lord.

As the foregoing and subsequent prophecies are generally admitted to be symbolical, and to represent successive or synchronical events which come to pass long before the day of judgment, the order, structure, and contents of the other prophecies seem to require that the language of this vision should be understood symbolically, and that the events which fulfil it, should be found in the same historical sequence. And I cannot but think it will be difficult to prove what is asserted, that a prediction of the final judgment, expressed in literal terms, has

been placed in the middle of a series of prophecies, all of which shall have been fulfilled centuries before the last day. This does not appear probable, and it is certainly not required by the language of the seal: for, the inhabitants of the earth and those only, who are in terror of the Lord and devoid of hope, being mentioned, a partial judgment which is to fall upon some special enemies of the Lord, seems to be predicted. As, however, some maintain the general judgment to be the scope of the vision, the satisfactory mode of determining the question appears to be, 1. To ascertain the meaning of similar language in other prophecies; 2. The scope of the prophecies which are interwoven with the seal.

Before I engage in this investigation, the following general explanation given by Sir Isaac Newton and Bishop Warburton, of the symbolical language of prophecy may be referred to:—

Sir Isaac Newton says: "The figurative language of the prophets is taken from the analogy between the world natural, and an empire or kingdom considered as a world politick. Accordingly, the whole world natural, consisting of heaven and earth, signifies the whole world politick, consisting of thrones or kingdoms, or so much of them as is considered in the prophecy; and the things in that world, signify the analagous things in this. For the heavens and the things in them, signify thrones and dignities, and the earth with the things thereof, the inferior people. . . . Great earthquakes, or the shaking of heaven and earth, are put for the shaking of kingdoms, so as to destroy or overturn them; the sun, for the whole species of kings in the world politick . . . Stars for subordinate princes and great men; and for bishops and rulers of the people of God, when the sun is Christ."

And, in like manner, Bishop Warburton: "The second kind (of the symbolick language of scripture) which answers to the tropical or hieroglyphical, is the calling emperors, kings, and nobles by the names of the heavenly luminaries, the sun, and the moon, and the stars: their temporary disasters or entire overthrow by eclipses or extinctions; the destruction of the nobility by stars falling from heaven; hostile invasions by thunders and tempestuous winds; the leaders of an army, conquerors, or founders of empires, by lions, bears, leopards, and goats. In

a word, the prophetic style seems to be a speaking hieroglyphic."—Divine Legation of Moses, b. iv. s. 4, vol. iv. p. 62.

Hence Milton's allusion, as Bishop Hurd has observed:

> . . . . "from behind the moon,
> In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds
> On half the nations, and with fear of change
> Perplexes monarchs."

Shakspeare calls the nobility "stars:"

> "Now, now, ye stars, that move in your right spheres,
> Where are your powers? shew now your mended faiths."
>
> King John—last scene.

We shall now proceed to ascertain the meaning of the language by its use in other prophecies.

The prophet Jeremiah represents the calamities impending over Judah, by the earth being reduced to chaos, the darkening of the heavenly luminaries, the trembling of the mountains, and the moving of the hills, or by a great and general convulsion of nature. "I beheld the earth, and lo! it was without form and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and lo! they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly."[1] This, as appears from the following verses, is a prophecy, in symbolical language, of the destruction of cities, and the desolation of a land: "I beheld, and lo! a fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the Lord, and by his fierce anger. For thus hath the Lord said, the whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end. For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black."

The subversion of the Babylonish monarchy is thus foretold by Isaiah: "The stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light: The sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not give her light to shine. . . I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place. . . . . Behold, I will stir up the Medes against

[1] Jeremiah, c. iv. 23.

them. . . . . And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah."[1]

The same figurative language, and in the same sense, is found in almost all the prophets. "Thus, saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land; I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come. I will shake the heavens and the earth; and I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them, and their horses and riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother."[2]

In these prophecies of Haggai, the shaking of the heavens and the earth signify the subversion of earthly polities. St. Paul[3] quotes the first, to prove that the Mosaic dispensation would be removed: "Whose voice then shook the earth? but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." And this word, yet once more, signifies the removing of those things, that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things that cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom, that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear.

The tabernacle or temple, with its service, was an essential and necessary part of the Mosaic law, so far forth, as it was an instituted form of national religion, and distinguished from the light of nature, or the religion of the patriarchs; but the tabernacle was a pattern, and made with hands (Heb. c. viii., ix.); consequently the law was of the things that are made. The apostle's reasoning, then, is,—the shaking of the heavens and of the earth, signifies the removal of things that are shaken, as of things that are made; but the Mosaic dispensation is of the things that are made, therefore it must be removed. Further, this shaking must extend to all nations, so that the Desire of all nations may come; that is, that they may hear the voice

[1] Isa. xiii. 10, 13, 16, 19. Compare Ezek. xxxii. 7.
[2] Hagai, ii. 7, 21, 22. Compare Joel, ii. 10, 30, 31; iii. 15; Ezek. xxxii. 7.
[3] Heb. xii. 26, &c.

of Jesus, and receive (the gospel) a kingdom which cannot be shaken. Consequently, civil or ecclesiastical constitutions, which are opposed to the gospel, and will not be changed so as to admit of its free publication and reception, shall be violently overthrown by the Lord Himself. This overturning is, in the symbolical language of prophecy, "the shaking of the heavens and of the earth."

As the imagery and language of the seal are the same as the imagery and language of many prophecies which foretell the calamities and revolutions of states, we are justified in believing, nay, almost compelled to believe, that the Apocalyptic prophecy has its accomplishment in like events.

Let us now examine the seal in connexion with the prophecies which are interwoven with it.

I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo! there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood.

The reference here is to two prophecies of Joel (chap. ii., 10, 31): "The earth shall quake before them. The sun and the moon shall be dark. . . . . The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood." "The earth shall quake, the sun and moon shall be dark," are allowed to predict disasters by war. It is not supposed to denote a physical convulsion, as an earthquake, or a change in the heavenly luminaries.

The second, the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, must also foretell national convulsions. It cannot be a prophecy of the awful change which shall take place in this mundane system at the day of judgment, not only because the imagery and the language are the same as the imagery and language of prophecies which foretell national changes, but because whosoever, even in the midst of these convulsions, shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Now, the scriptures do not allow us to believe, that, in the last day, whosoever shall *then* call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. The Judge himself has said it will be *then* too late to cry for mercy: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I

profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity."[1]

Another of the interwoven prophecies is taken from Isaiah, xxxiv. 4—"All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll; and all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree." The prophecy of Isaiah foretells a visitation or outpouring of Divine vengeance on some noted enemies of the Lord, on "the people of His curse," and "the controversy is for Zion." It cannot possibly predict the general judgment; for the works of art and creation remain long after the destruction of Edom and Idumea. The mountains melt with blood; the cormorant and the bittern possess the ruined state; the owl and the raven dwell in it. Neither are all the inhabitants destroyed, though the survivors are reduced to great proverty and distress—"They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing." And many of the works of art remain amidst the scene of desolation—"Thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses." Hence, the demolition, continuing through a long tract of time, "the day of vengeance," of a great system of tyranny is the subject of Isaiah's prophecy. And the scope of the fourth verse appears to be the subversion of a system of pure heathenism, and not of a corrupted Christianity, moulded after a heathen model; for the time of the whole judgment is "the day of vengeance," or "the year of the recompense for the controversy of Zion;" but "the day of vengeance" commenced A.D. 66, when no great people had professed Christianity: consequently the judgment would appear to be directed in its early stages against a persecuting heathen power: the seal, therefore, this part of Isaiah's prophecy being made a part of it, will have its accomplishment in the same events.

The scope of the Apocalyptic vision,[2] as thus determined, is fully sustained and confirmed by the other prophecies

[1] Matthew, vii.

[2] Mede, in his explanation of the seal, understands the "moon" to represent the heathen Roman priesthood. And we shall have reason to see, in the exposition of the twelfth chapter, that there the moon is the symbol of heathenism.

referred to: they are from Hosea and Isaiah, and foretell the overthrow of heathen idols. "The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed; the thorn and the thistle shall come up on their altars; and they shall say to the hills, Cover us, and to the mountains, Fall on us."[1] And again, from Isaiah—"The idols He shall utterly destroy. And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth."[2]

The scene of the visitation, Rev. vi., is the earth, which has been proved to be the Roman empire; the time of it is after the publication and before the establishment of Christianity; and the chronological order of the visions direct us to look for the predicted events, in the history of Rome, either during the latter part of the third or sometime in the fourth century. They are wars, and the fall of a great heathen system of idolatry—the ruin of princes and nobles, and a dreadful fear of the wrath of the Lord. These will be found to be the characteristics of the fall of Roman heathenism in the fourth century.

But before we proceed to the historical illustration it will be necessary to prove, that Roman heathenism was a great religious system. This, we think, will be done, if it be shown, that the religion of Rome was established by the laws, its peculiar rites and worship vigilantly guarded by the magistrate, and enforced by the authority and power of the state, and the affairs of the state, foreign and domestic, made to depend on the established religion.

Numa Pompilius established a regular system of religion, which he pretended to receive by divine revelation from the goddess Egeria: he appointed the priesthood and rites by which the gods should be worshipped, and the sources from which the revenues were to be derived in order to support the public worship: he chose a public pontiff, to whom he gave a sealed written law, directing what sacrifices were to be offered, on what days and in what temples the sacred rites should be performed; and he ordered that all matters pertaining to religion,

[1] Hosea, x. 8. [2] Isaiah, ii. 21.

both public and private, should be subject to the decision of this public pontiff: so that the people might know to whom they were to resort in every case of doubt and difficulty;[1] and that the religious rites of their country might be neither neglected nor depraved by foreign mixtures.[2]

These positive and prohibitory laws of Numa were steadily maintained (in their spirit) and rigorously enforced for more than a thousand years; and during that time the Roman gods (that is, the gods approved by the state) were worshipped[3] (patrios ritus, patrio more) "after the Roman manner," or by "Roman rites," from which all foreign ceremonies were sternly excluded.

Hence, acting on these laws and the constitutional principle embodied in them, Pliny at once put the Christians to death for refusing to worship, by the customary rites, the image of the emperor, and the images of the other Roman gods. And when Diocletian ordered the sacred books and the writings of the Christians to be given up and burned, the ministers of religion to be imprisoned or slain, and churches to be destroyed, he enforced a fundamental principle of the Roman constitution, which required all books pertaining to religion, and every form of worship that was not sanctioned by Rome, to be destroyed.[4] And Galerius, in the edict of toleration that he

[1] Livy, b. i. c. xix. p. 20.

[2] Ib., "Ne quid divini juris negligendo patrios ritus peregrinosque asciscendo turbaretur."

[3] "Datum inde negotium ædilibus, ut animadverterent, ne qui nisi Romani dii neu quo alio more quam patrio colerentur."—Ib. iv. c. 30; compare 25, p. 1; 39, p. 16. These laws were made a part of the twelve tables. "Separatim nemo habessit Deos: neve novos, neve advenas, nisi publice adscitos, privatim colunto." Thus translated by Warburton—"No man shall worship the gods clandestinely, or have them separately to himself; nor shall any new or foreign gods be worshipped by particulars, till such god hath been legally approved of and tolerated by the magistrate."—Divine Legation of Moses, b. ii. sec. 6. Compare Dion Cassius, b lii.; Tacit. An. b. ii. 85.

[4] "Quoties hoc patrum avorumque ætate negotium est magistratibus datum ut sacra externa fieri vetarent? Sacrificulos, vatesq. foro, circo, urbe prohiberent? Vaticinos libros conquirerent comburentque? omnem disciplinam sacrificandi præterquam more Romano abolerent?"—"How often in the time of our fathers and ancestors have the magistrates been commanded to forbid the rights of a foreign religion? not to suffer its priest and diviners to come into the forum, the circus, the city? to search for and burn their prophetic books? to abolish every way of sacrificing which was not according to the Roman custom?"—Livy, b. xxxix. c. 16; iv. 30.

was compelled to issue before his death, alleges "the ancient laws and constitution of the Romans"[1] as the reason of his vain attempt to extirpate Christianity.

In short, the whole religion of ancient Romanism was strictly settled and regulated by law, and there was no emergency however sudden and seemingly unexpected which had not been provided for by public authority.

The self-immolation of the consul Decius, in the Latin war, affords an example of this provident forethought and care. His army being almost defeated, he determined to offer himself a propitiatory sacrifice for the salvation of his legions and country. But, as he would offer the sacrifice orderly and in due form only, the public pontiff of the Roman people was summoned to instruct him in the legal manner of sacrificing. And the public pontiff of the Roman people, without a moment's hesitation, amidst the din and tumult of a fierce and adverse battle, told the consul the dress he should wear, the way it should be worn, the posture in which he should stand, and the words to be repeated in devoting himself.[2]

But a very different order of things is observable among the Greeks;[3] for even in their best policied states many most important matters, with regard to religion, were absolutely undetermined by public authority; and when a difficulty arose, it was left to popular feeling to decide, sometimes one way, sometimes another, and sometimes not at all: and this on occasions when their most important interests were at stake.

[1] "Volueramus antehac juxta leges veteres et publicam disciplinam Romanorum cuncta corrigere," &c. &c.—"We wished to correct all things according to the ancient laws and established constitution of the Romans; and that the Christians who had forsaken the religion of their ancestors should return to a right mind."—Lardner, vol. vii. p. 529.

[2] Livy, b. viii. c. 9; x. 28.

[3] The different spirit of the Greek and Roman heathenism can be easily traced in the Scriptures. St. Paul, in preaching the Gospel at Ephesus and other cities, was often exposed to popular violence, but the magistrates protected him because he had violated no law; and the learned Athenians heard him with curiosity and contempt. But matters immediately assumed another aspect as soon as he preached in a Roman colony, governed by the municipal law of Rome, and among a people trained in the heathenism of Rome. Here he is at once taken up, accused of teaching "customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans," and he and his friends are scourged and imprisoned by the magistrates.—Acts, xvi. 19, &c.

Before the battle of Salamis, Themistocles, while sacrificing, was ordered by the soothsayer to sacrifice three Persian captives to Bacchus; for hereby, it was said, the Greeks would not only save themselves, but also obtain the victory. Themistocles, says Plutarch, "was startled at a prophecy that carried so much cruelty and inhumanity with it; but the populace, according to their manner in all pressing difficulties, trusting more to any extravagant and absurd means of safety than to such as are reasonable, with one voice invoked Bacchus, and bringing the captives to the altar, compelled him to perform the sacrifice."

The night before the battle of Leuctra, Pelopidas was commanded in a dream to sacrifice a red-haired virgin to the Leuctridæ. Being unwilling to offer so inhuman a facrifice, he told his dream the next morning to the soothsayer and the commanders. "Some were of opinion that this order ought not to be neglected or disobeyed;" and they enforced their sentiments by various arguments and examples. "Others insisted that so barbarous and unjust an oblation could not be acceptable to any superior being; that it was absurd to suppose that the gods took delight in human sacrifices, and if any of them did, they were to be neglected as vicious and impotent beings." The sentiment of mercy prevailed, and a colt was substituted for the red-haired virgin.

In the Macedonian war, when the Roman and Macedonian armies were encamped near each other, there was a total eclipse of the moon. The Romans immediately resorted to their religious rites appointed to be observed on such an occasion, while their enemies were struck with dismay.

"The Romans, according to their custom, with the noise of brass pans, and lifting up a great many fire brands and torches, endeavoured to recover her light; whilst the Macedonians behaved themselves far otherwise, for horror and amazement seized their whole army, and a rumour crept by degrees into their camp, that this eclipse portended the downfall of their king. Æmilius being very devout, a religious observer of sacrifices, and well skilled in the art of divination, as soon as he had perceived the moon had regained her former lustre, he offered up to her eleven heifers."

All the foreign and domestic affairs of the Romans were made

to depend on their religion. The augurs, who were appointed to divine by the flight of birds, were entrusted by the Roman constitution with most extraordinary powers.

"Nothing was more absolute than the power and authority of these augurs. They had the privilege of dismissing assemblies, though summoned by order of the chief magistrates, and to annul whatever had been transacted in them. An augur had only to pronounce another day, and all was at a stop. They could oblige the consuls to quit their office; and had a right to confer with the people, to grant or refuse whatever they pleased, and abrogate the laws they had enacted. In short, nothing done by the magistrates, either within the walls or without, could be ratified without their authority.

"The priests, whose business it was to observe the flying of birds at the time of choosing the consuls, declared that the election of those two (Quintius Flaminius and Furius Philo) was unduly and inauspiciously made. Hereupon the senate immediately despatched letters to the army, expressly forbidding the consuls to attempt anything against the enemy in that capacity, and enjoining them to return with all speed to Rome, in order to lay down their office. Flaminius having received these letters, deferred opening them till he had fought and defeated the enemy, and ravaged their whole country; after which he marched towards Rome. But though he carried a prodigious booty home with him, none of the people went out to meet him; nay, they had like to have denied him the honour of a triumph, because he did not instantly obey the senate, but slighted and despised their orders; and as soon as the triumph was ended, both he and his colleague were deposed from their office, and reduced to the condition of private citizens; such a respect had the Romans for religion, making all their affairs depend solely on the pleasure of the gods."[1]

This mighty system of heathenism,[2] so hostile to revealed religion, supported so long and enforced by all the authority and power of Rome, received a deadly blow in the beginning,

[1] Plutarch in Themisticoles, Pelopidas and P. Æmilius, translated by Langhorne.

[2] Vitringa, in his exposition of Isaiah, xxxiv. 4, considers the fourth verse a parallel prophecy with Revelation, vi. 13, 14; but he again expresses a strong doubt as to the soundness of this opinion. His difficulty is, that in prophecy, as he justly says, the people of God are represented under one great economy, and that the prophecy of Isaiah refers to the destruction of a system, which, exhibiting the image of such an economy, is opposed to the truth. He, therefore, thinks the verse will have

and was totally suppressed before the close of the fourth century.

A rapid sketch shall now be given of the events which produced this great revolution, ruined the supporters of idolatry, and filled them with an unspeakable dread of the Lord.

The Roman empire was governed, as we have seen, by four emperors, Diocletian and Maximian having the supreme dignity of Augustus; Galerius and Constantius Chlorus being in the subordinate rank of Cæsars.

Diocletian and Maximian resigned the purple, A.D. 305, coerced thereto, as it is said, by Galerius.

Galerius and Constantius Chlorus succeeded to the supreme honour; and Severus and Maximin, who were both the friends of Galerius, were made Cæsars; Severus, in the west, and Maximin, in the east.

In the same year Maxentius, the son of Maximian, enraged that his claims to the vacant Cæsarship had been passed over, assumed the purple in Italy, and, foreseeing war to be inevitable, invited his father who had great military talents, to withdraw from his retirement, and share with him the sovereignty.

Maximian readily acceding to his request, the Roman world had six emperors, and the Christian religion, five imperial enemies.

Constantius Chlorus died at York, A.D. 306, and was succeeded by his son, Constantine, with the subordinate rank of Cæsar.

The state of the empire, which now became the theatre of a series of bloody civil wars, is thus described by Gibbon:—"The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion: the empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms

its accomplishment in the destruction of the mystical Babylon. But Vitringa does not appear to have recollected that ancient Romanism was such a system—that it claimed a divine origin—that it was established, fenced, and sedulously guarded by the laws—that it was opposed to revealed religion—that its votaries claimed to be the followers of reason and piety—hated the Jews, and fiercely persecuted the Christians.

between several hostile monarchs, who, viewing each other with an eye of hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expense of their subjects."[1]

The first civil war broke out in Italy between Severus, Maxentius, and Maximian. Severus was defeated, taken prisoner, and allowed by the victors to choose whether he would die by his own hands, or by the hands of the executione

Galerius to avenge the death of his friend invaded Italy, from which he was compelled to retreat with loss and disgrace.

Not long after their victory Maximian and Maxentius quarrelled. Maximian fled to the court of his son-in-law, Constantine, intrigued against and attempted to dethrone him: his intrigues were discovered; he was taken, cast into prison, and, like Severus, allowed to choose whether he would die by his own hand, or the hand of the public executioner.

In the year 312, the civil war broke out between Constantine and Maxentius. Maxentius was defeated in three battles, and, as he fled from the third, drowned in crossing the Tiber. The victor, says Gibbon, "put to death the two sons of the tyrant, and carefully extirpated his whole race."

The next civil war was between Maximin and Licinius (raised to the purple on the death of Severus). Maximin[2] was defeated, and killed himself in despair. All his family and friends were involved in his ruin.

The civil wars terminated in the triumph of Constantine, the overthrow of paganism, the ruin of its great supporters, and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the empire. Paganism never recovered the shock. Julian, indeed, cast down Christianity, and restored the gods to their old place; but they fell immediately with their patron; and heathenism, as a public form of worship, was suppressed shortly after, without a murmur.

THE FALL OF PRINCES AND NOBLES.

It is evident that, when paganism, after a fierce and protracted

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. ii. c. xiv, p. 54.

[2] His son and daughter were immediately killed, and his wife was thrown into the Orontes, in which she had caused many Christians to be immersed.—Lactantius de mort persecut., 50.

struggle, ceased to be the religion of a mighty empire, was discountenanced by the monarch, shorn of pomp and wealth, and its frauds exposed, the priesthood and its supporters would be involved in its ruin.

As we have had already occasion to notice the fate of Severus, Maximian, Maxentius, Maximin,[1] and their families, we shall now proceed to give a brief account of the fortunes of the other great persecutors, their families, and friends.

Galerius died miserably in 311; and his child, wife, mother-in-law, and their friends, being left without a protector, were persecuted, tortured, and put to death without pity.

Maximin wished to marry Valeria, who was the daughter of Diocletian and widow of Galerius; but meeting with a repulse,

"His love," says Gibbon,[2] "was converted into fury. . . . . Her estates were confiscated; her eunuchs and domestics were devoted to the most inhuman tortures, and several innocent and respectable matrons, who were honoured with her friendship, suffered death on a false accusation of adultery. The empress herself, together with her mother Prisca, was condemned to exile; and as they were ignominiously hurried from place to place, before they were confined to a sequestered village in the deserts of Syria, they exposed their shame and distress to the provinces of the East, which, during thirty years, had respected their august dignity." After the death of Maximin, they fell into the hands of Licinius. "His behaviour in the first days of his reign, and the honourable reception which he gave to young Candidianus (the son of Galerius) inspired Valeria with a secret satisfaction, both on her own account and that of her adopted son. But these grateful prospects were soon succeeded by horror and astonishment; and the bloody executions which stained the palace of Nicomedia, sufficiently convinced her, that the throne of Maximin was filled by a tyrant more inhuman than himself. Valeria consulted her safety by a hasty flight, and still accompanied by her mother Prisca, they wandered about fifteen months through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian habits. They were at length discovered at Thessalonica, and as the sentence of their death

[1] "It is remarkable," says Milner, that all the associates of Maximin in his crimes, partook also of his punishment. Among these Culician, the bloody governor of Thebais and Theotecnus, are distinguished. His enchanters were by torments compelled to lay open the frauds of their employers, and he and they with all the children and relations of the tyrant, were destroyed."

[2] Decline and Fall, vol. ii. c. xiv. p. 95.

was already pronounced, they were immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the sea. . . . .

"Such was the unworthy fate of the wife and daughter of Diocletian. We lament their misfortunes; we cannot discover their crimes; and what ever idea we may justly entertain of the cruelty of Licinius, it remains a matter of surprise, that he was not contented with a more decent and secret method of revenge."

Diocletian, who had been for twenty years master of the world, lived long enough to be a witness of the calamities of the empire, the ruin of heathenism, the almost certain triumph of the religion he had endeavoured to extirpate, the success of his personal enemy, the destruction of his statues, and the misfortunes of his wife and child: whom, having endeavoured in vain to protect by many and importunate intercessions, and having experienced the bitterness of his most earnest prayers being treated with contempt, he was so overwhelmed with sorrow, that, unable to eat or sleep, or rest, he at last died, wasted by hunger and anguish of mind.[1]

Licinius, the last of these great persecutors, was defeated in several engagements by Constantine, obliged to resign the purple, and, to retire as a private individual to Thesalonica, where he soon died by his own hands or the sentence of the victor.

The seal predicts that the Lord would be the object of a dreadful fear and dismay.

"AND THEY SAID TO THE MOUNTAINS AND ROCKS, FALL ON US, AND HIDE US FROM THE FACE OF HIM THAT SITTETH ON THE THRONE, AND FROM THE WRATH OF THE LAMB: FOR THE GREAT DAY OF HIS WRATH IS COME."

Before we adduce historical testimony of the fact, we shall notice the change which appears to have taken place, generally, in the minds of the pagans, during the progress of the Diocletian persecution.

The Christians, because they refused to worship the gods, and had neither images nor sacrifices, were accused by their

[1] Lactantius, p. 42.

enemies of atheism, and of worshipping a crucified malefactor. This, or some such opinion, must have prevailed very extensively at the breaking out of the persecution, because the extirpation of Christianity was the avowed object and boast of the persecutors. But many of the heathens, the fiercest and highest of them, were, at last, made to confess that the God of the Christians could both save and destroy. The pagans, however, although they might admit the Deity of Christ, would not, therefore, renounce paganism and embrace Christianity; for their belief in His Divinity would, in consequence of their notions of local and national deities, lead them, necessarily, no farther, than (a like faith did the Egyptians[1] and Philistines[2]) to acknowledge Jesus to be a God; perhaps a very terrible one, who could be worshipped acceptably by his own people only, and according to his own appointed rites. Now, if there were no historical evidence of this state of mind, we might safely conclude, from the known opinions of the heathens, and the success of the supporters of Christianity, that a dread of their God would become very prevalent during the course of the civil wars.

Constantine had early expressed his contempt of the old faith, declared his belief in Christianity, and professed himself to be the servant of Jehovah. His success from the commencement was uniform and almost without a check; and before the end of the war it was manifest to all, that victory would rest with him. The heathens believed victory to be the gift of the gods: seeing, therefore, the defeats and dissasters of all the supporters of paganism, and the successful career of the man who had proclaimed himself the enemy of the gods and the champion of the Christian cause, they would naturally dread that powerful God, whom they had despised, and whose worshippers they had cruelly persecuted and endeavoured to destroy. Now, that such a dread did exist, we have the most undoubted historical testimony in the edict of Galerius, and in the behaviour of Maximin before his death.

Galerius, the chief author of the Diocletian persecution, was attacked, in the year 309, by a painful and loathsome disease;

[1] Exodus, xxii. 33. [2] Samuel, v. vi.; compare 2 Kings, xvii. 24, &c.

his body was filled with ulcers, which swarmed with vermin, and diffused an intolerable odour through the whole palace. He had recourse in vain to medicine, to sacrifice, and to charms; and after lingering more than a year in hopeless misery, he died in 311. But a short time before his death, he published an edict, wherein he grants the Christians toleration, acknowledges the divinity of the Lord, and entreats their prayers for his safety.

The following is Gibbon's translation of it:—

"Among the important cares which have occupied our minds for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and re-establish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming into the way of reason and nature the deluded Christians who had renounced the religion and ceremonies instituted by their fathers; and, presumptuously despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws and opinions, according to the dictates of their fancy, and collected a various society (varios populos, various peoples) from the different provinces of our empire. The edict which we have published to enforce the worship of the gods, having exposed many of the Christians to danger and distress, many having suffered death, and many more, who still persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of any public exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to these unhappy men the effect of our wonted clemency. We permit them, therefore, freely to profess their private opinions. . . . . And we hope that our indulgence will engage the Christians to offer up their prayers to the deity whom they adore for our safety and prosperity, &c."[1]

Such is the celebrated edict of Galerius; justifying his past atrocities, accusing the Christians of impious folly, acknowledging their God, and imploring those whom he calls impious fools to pray to their God for his safety and the safety of the empire. It undoubtedly manifests neither remorse nor repentance; but it surely exhibits, in a way that could not be anticipated in the public document of a fierce, proud man, whose will had been long a law to millions, a mind fearfully distracted by contending passions and a special dread of the Lord. If Galerius had been free from terror, he would not have implored the people who alone, among millions, had dared to resist his will, and whom

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xvi.

he still hates, to pray to their God for his safety. Before such a man could be driven to make such a request, a great change must have been wrought on his mind, and, not without a fierce and protracted struggle. But he had felt the lash, and the iron had entered into his soul; and neither the secresy of his palace nor the summit of earthly power could mitigate his agony or conceal his terror.

Maximin, after his defeat by Licinius, fled to Tarsus, where he ordered a sumptuous feast, partook of it largely, and then swallowed poison. But its operation being obstructed by the quantity of food and wine which he had gorged, his sufferings were painfully prolonged for many days. In his intolerable agony, he snatched up the earth in handsful which he attempted to devour, and beat his head against the wall till his eyes leaped out from their sockets; then becoming blind and seeing (Lactantius[1] says) God and His ministers clad in white, judging him, he called out like those who are tortured, it was not he, but others, who did it. Afterward, as if compelled by torture, he confessed his guilt, praying and imploring Christ to pity him. And at last, with groans which he uttered, as one who is consumed by fire, he breathed out his guilty soul.

Having thus explained the different parts of the vision, we shall now conclude with a brief recapitulation: An earthquake is seen—the sun becomes black as sackcloth and the moon becomes as blood—the stars of heaven fall to the earth—the heavens depart as a scroll—the mountains and islands are moved out of their places—the kings of the earth, the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, the mighty men, and every bond man and every free man hide themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and cry to the rocks and the mountains to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. It has been shown that an earthquake—the darkening of the sun—the changing of the moon into blood—the fall of the stars from heaven, represent, in the symbolical language of the Bible, wars and convulsions in states, the fall of princes and nobles—that the judgment represented in the seal cannot be the general

[1] De Mort Persecut. 49.

judgment, for it is partial, directed against some special enemies of the Lord—that the scene of it is the Roman world after the publication of the gospel, in the third or fourth century—that the interwoven prophecies and language show it must represent the violent destruction of a pagan system of religion, the fall of princes and nobles, accompanied with a great and general dread of the Lord. Corresponding with these symbolical representations, it has been shown that pagan Romanism, which was established, regulated, and enforced by the laws, was such a system—that this system of superstition and intolerance, which had lasted for more than a thousand years, was demolished in the fourth century by a terrible convulsion—that its supporters, who impiously attempted to extirpate Christianity, were defeated and ruined—that their friends and followers fell with them—and that the fierce persecutors, struck with a dreadful dismay of the Lord, were made to deprecate His wrath and proclaim their terror.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SEALED.

The twelve tribes of Israel—the twelve thousand sealed out of every tribe—the rest who are not sealed.

"AND after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand."[1]

The twelve tribes, out of each of which 12,000 are sealed, cannot be the twelve tribes, or the people of Israel, as they were

[1] Rev. vii., 1, &c.

naturally descended from Abraham, for neither their names nor order are the same as in the Mosaic list.

The tribes of Dan and Ephraim, wherein idolatry commenced and was carried to a great height, are omitted in the Revelation, and Joseph and Levi are mentioned instead of them.

Joseph appears to be named because pre-eminent blessings were conferred on him when Jacob foretold the fortunes of his sons: "Blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breast and of the womb; the blessings of thy fathers have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills."[1] The blessings of the breast and of the womb, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, seems to be a promise that his name should be always remembered.

The Levites were not numbered in the Jewish dispensation among their brethren, neither had they an inheritance among the children of Israel;[2] for the Lord was their inheritance:[3] but as, under the Christian, there is nothing peculiar or exclusive, all having the same inheritance amongst them who are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus,[4] they will be reckoned with the other tribes. Moreover, Levites are expressly mentioned in a remarkable gospel prophecy. Thus, in Isaiah,[5] the Lord says, "They shall declare My glory among the Gentiles. . . And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites." As this is a Christian prophecy, foretelling in the terms of the law, the conversion of the Gentiles and the state of the Christian church, it is only in analogy with this and like prophecies, to find the tribe of Levi mentioned in a symbolical vision of the Revelation, the subject of which is the Christian church.

The Apocalyptic order of the tribes, and the Mosaic, are different: for in the latter Reuben is first, but in the former Judah, from whom the Lord sprang, has the precedence: and in the Old Testament, the children of Leah and Rachel are mentioned before the children of their respective maids; but in the New, there being, under the Gospel, "neither bond nor free,"

[1] Genesis, xlix., 26, 27; Deut. xxx., 13. [2] Numbers, xviii., 24. [3] Deut. x., 9.
[4] Acts, xxvi., 18; Rom. iv., 12, &c.; 1 Cor. iii., 21. [5] lxvi., 18. 21.

the children of the bond and free are mingled; and Joseph and Benjamin are last of all.

Hence, it would appear that the twelve tribes out of which the 144,000 are sealed, represent the entire Christian people or church. And this is confirmed by the symbols and language of scripture. For in the Bible, there is only one[1] church, though existing in two different states: before the publication of the Gospel, she is "the good olive tree," as yet without grafts; after the preaching of it and the accession of the Gentiles, she is still the "good olive tree into which the wild olive (the Gentiles) has been grafted:" therefore, as the grafts partake of the "root and fatness," and so of the nature of the "good olive tree," they will be considered natural branches, and be called by the same name. And, accordingly, all faithful believers are regarded both in the Old Testament[2] and in the New[3] as the progeny of Abraham; and they are called by St. Paul "the children of" Sarah, "the seed of Abraham," "the Israel of God;" and by St. John[4] "Jews," and "the names of the twelve tribes of Israel are written" on the gates of the "Holy Jerusalem."

Twelve thousand out of each of the twelve tribes, or 144,000 from the whole mass, are sealed.

THE SEALED ARE THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

Sealing is used in the scriptures to denote safety, preservation from pollution and holiness. Thus in Solomon's Song,[5] "A garden enclosed, is my sister, my spouse;" a "spring shut up, a fountain sealed." "Him hath God the Father sealed."[6] Now He which establisheth us with you in Christ is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.[7] Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.[8] Consequently, the sealed are

[1] Rom. xi., 17; Gal. iv. [2] Isaiah, li.; liv. [3] Gal. iii. 29, iv. 31, vi. 16; Rom. iv.
[4] Rev. ii. 19, iii. 9, xxi. 12. [5] Song of Solomon, iv. 12.
[6] John, vi. 27. [7] 2 Cor. i. 21. [8] Eph. i. 14, iv. 30.

those who are preserved in a state of Christian purity and holiness, and are saved from impending calamities.

But the meaning of the sealing and of the entire of this part of the vision will, perhaps, be best collected from Ezekiel, ix., to which there is a manifest reference.

The greater part of the inhabitants of Jerusalem had become gross idolaters; and God having determined to punish the guilty and save the innocent, His purpose is revealed to the prophet in a "vision, whereby is shewed the preservation of some and the destruction of all the rest."

A man is seen clothed in a linen garment, with an ink horn, who is commanded to set a mark on all who shall be saved; and six men, with slaughter weapons, who are commanded to follow and slay all who have not been marked. "And the Lord said unto him, Go, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men, that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others He said, in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite; let neither your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids and little children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark: and begin at my sanctuary."

Sealing twelve thousand out of or from every tribe in the Apocalyptic vision, and leaving the remainder unsealed, denotes (as interpreted by Ezekiel) a very general corruption in the church, and that calamities were impending.[1] But as God has many servants, the apostacy is not total; and the sealing of them implies that notwithstanding these corruptions, He would always have many servants, who should be preserved in the midst of those evils which were ready to assail the church, both from within and from without.[2]

[1] "The sealing of the servants of God in their forehead, (Rev. vii.) was the same token of the care God has of his own people with this here; only this was to secure them from being destroyed, that from being seduced, which is equivalent."—
Mathew Henry on Ezekiel.

[2] As the heads of the twelve tribes of the Jewish nation represented the whole body of that people, so these true and faithful Christians are here styled the true Israel of God, who are built upon the foundation of the twelve apostles of Christ, steadily

I have no observations to make on verses 9—17; because they seem to me to predict a state of things which has not yet come to pass.

We shall now proceed to the first part of chapter viii., and having explained it, return to the storm, chapter vii.

adhering to the doctrine and worship taught by them. The number here mentioned, 144,000, is not intended to signify an exact number, but, generally, to show the number of sincere and virtuous to be considerable, though small in comparison with the greater number of apostate and idolatrous Christians in the future times of the church. Pyle cited by D'Oyly and Mant. And see Vitringa on this vision.

CHAPTER XII.

FIRE CAST UPON THE EARTH FROM THE GOLDEN ALTAR.

Revelations, viii.

The scene of the vision—the angel offering incense—casting fire on the earth—the silence of half an hour—the time, place, and character of the events—historical illustrations.

"AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake."[1]

The scene of this vision is the sanctuary or house[2] at the golden altar, upon which the incense was burnt; and the incense[3] that smoked upon it, was typical of the prayers and devotions of the saints.

The fire which the angel takes from the altar and casts on the earth, denotes divine wrath; for in the figurative language of scripture fire is often the symbol of vengeance. "I am come," says the Lord, "to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled:"[4] which is thus more plainly expressed in the gospel of St. Matthew: "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I am come not to send peace but a sword."[5]

In the casting of the coals of fire on the earth, there is again an obvious allusion to a remarkable vision of Ezekiel. In the

[1] Rev. viii. [2] Exodus, xxx., 1, &c. [3] Psalm cxli., 2; Rev. v. 8.
[4] Luke, xii., 4. [5] Mat. x., 34, 35.

eighth chapter, the prophet gives a graphic description of the idolatry practised in Jerusalem; in the ninth, the idolaters are slain; in the tenth, the glory of the Lord departs from the city, but before its departure, the man clothed with linen is commanded "to fill his hands with coals of fire, and scatter them over the city." The scattering of coals of fire signifies the destruction of Jerusalem for the sins and crimes of its people;[1] the coals of fire denoting the divine vengeance. The angel, then, offering the incense with the prayers of the saints, represents the pure service of the Christian church, offered acceptably to God by their Great High Priest; and the taking fire from the altar and casting it on the earth, signifies the outpouring of the Divine vengeance on account of the corruptions of the church, which, as implied in the vision of the sealing, had pervaded the great body of the Christian community.

When the angel cast the fire on the earth, there were voices and thunderings and lightnings and an earthquake. These are the symbols of strife, confusion, war, and convulsions; and the fire being taken from the altar[2] indicates that they are to spring from religion.

Having thus ascertained the character of the events, a few observations shall be made, as to their time and place, before we proceed to their historical illustration.

The earth or the Roman world, is the theatre of them, and they commence after the silence which was in heaven for half an hour.

The silence in heaven is thought to be an allusion to the silence in the temple during the time of incense; but as peace had been recently restored to the Christian church, and as the temple, its services and worshippers, were typical of the worship and service of the Christian church. The symbolical silence of half an hour indicates, that silence or peace had prevailed for a

[1] "Coals of fire do elsewhere denote Divine vengeance.—Psalm, cxx, 4; cxl, 10. Rev. viii., 5." W. Lowth, and to the same effect, Calvin cited Pol. Synop. Cherubim qui antea gratiæ, nunc vindictæ, ministri sunt. The cherubim, before the ministers of grace, are now the ministers of vengeance.

[2] Ignis hic ab altari sumptus notat divisiones et contentiones, circa res non civiles sed spirituales. The fire taken from the altar denotes divisions and contentions, about things spiritual, not civil.—Pol. Synop.

short time in the church before the casting of the fire from the altar. The time of such a peace, as well as the commencement of general and furious religious commotions can be easily ascertained.

The Diocletian persecution, which had ceased before the year 313, in every part of the empire, except in Maximin's dominions, was then brought to a close by the edict of Milan; which restored the Christians to their liberty and property, and granted a free toleration to all the inhabitants of the Roman world. But unhappily, the church was scarcely delivered from the persecuting spirit and assaults of a hostile government, when her members fell out among themselves, disgracing religion by their odious quarrels, and filling every province with strife and blood.

The first great contest, the Donatist, was caused by a disputed election. Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, dying A. D. 311, was succeeded by Cæcilian, whose election was approved by nearly the whole of the church; but a small though powerful party, (called Donatists from their leader, Donatus) pronouncing the election irregular, and refusing to recognise his episcopal authority, their obstinacy produced a schism in the church A. D. 315; then a civil war, which desolated Africa, till it and the whole party were extinguished by the irruption of the Mahometan Arabs.

In the year 317, Arius, a presbyter of Alexandria, who denied the Divinity of the Lord, began publicly to broach his peculiar opinions. This heresy was attended by a train of consequences far more fatal to the peace of the Christian world, than the schism and madness of the Donatists: for it was the immediate cause of strife and blood, as well as the prolific parent of other heresies, every one of which generated new contentions, seditions, murders and wars.

Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, who was banished for his adhesion to the doctrines of the Trinity, thus describes the confusion that the Arian controversy produced in a large part of the Roman world:—

"It is a thing equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us; because we make

creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. The Homoousion is rejected, and received, and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and of the Son, is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. Every year, nay every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries. We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we defended. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of each other's ruin."[1]

"The abuse of Christianity," says Gibbon, "introduced into the Roman government new causes of tyranny and sedition; the bands of civil society were torn asunder by the fury of religious factions; and the obscure citizen who might calmly have surveyed the elevation and fall of successive emperors, imagined and experienced, that his own life and fortunes were connected with the interests of a popular ecclesiastic. The example of the two capitals, Rome and Constantinople, may serve to represent the state of the empire, and the temper of mankind, under the reign of the sons of Constantine."[2]

Liberius, bishop of Rome, was banished, because he confessed the faith of the Trinity in Unity; but finding his exile disagreeable, he consented to become a Semi-Arian, was permitted to return, and convert Rome into a slaughter house.

"After some ineffectual resistance his rival was expelled from the city by the permission of the emperor; the adherents of Felix were inhumanly murdered in the streets, in the public places, in the baths, and even in the churches; and the face of Rome, upon the return of a Christian bishop, renewed the horrid image of the massacres of Marius, and the proscriptions of Sylla. . . . The episcopal throne of Constantinople was disputed by Paul and Macedonius. . . . In the space of fourteen years Paul was driven five times from the throne; to which he was more frequently restored by the violence of the people, than by the permission of the prince; and the power of Macedonius could be secured only by the death of his rival. The unfortunate Paul was dragged in chains from the sandy deserts of Mesopotamia to the most desolate places of Mount Taurus, confined in a dark and narrow dungeon, and left six days without food, and at length strangled by Philip, one of the principal ministers of the emperor Constantius. The first blood which stained the new capital was spilt in these ecclesiastical contests; and

[1] Decline and Fall, vol iii. p. 24. [2] Ib., c. xxi. pp. 62, 65.

many persons were slain on both sides, in the furious and obstinate seditions of the people. . . . .

"While the flames of the Arian controversy consumed the vitals of the empire, the African provinces were infested (A. D. 345, &c.) by their peculiar enemies the savage fanatics, who under the name of Circumcellions, formed the strength and the scandal of the Donatist party. . . . The violence of the officers of justice, who were occasionally sustained by a military guard, was sometimes repelled with equal violence; and the blood of some popular ecclesiastics, which had been shed in the quarrel, inflamed their rude followers with an eager desire of revenging the death of these holy martyrs. . . The leaders of the Circumcellions assumed the title of captains of the saints; their principal weapon, as they were indifferently provided with swords and spears, was a huge and weighty club which they termed an Israelite; and the well-known sound of praise be to God, which they used as their cry of war, diffused consternation over the unarmed provinces of Africa.[1]

"The splendid vices of the Church of Rome, under the reign of Valentinian and Damasus, (A. D. 366—84,) have been curiously observed by the historian Ammianus, who delivers his impartial sense in these expressive words:—The prefecture of Juventius was accompanied with peace and plenty; but the tranquillity of his government was soon disturbed by a bloody sedition of the distracted people. The ardour of Damasus and Ursinus, to seize the episcopal seat, surpassed the ordinary measure of human ambition. They contended with the rage of party; the quarrel was maintained by the wounds and death of their followers; and the prefect, unable to resist or appease the tumult, was constrained by superior violence to retire into the suburbs. Damasus prevailed, the well disputed victory remained on the side of his faction: one hundred and thirty-seven dead bodies were found in the Basilica of Sicininus where the Christians hold their assemblies; and it was long before the minds of the angry people assumed their accustomed tranquillity."[2]

The sedition, the strife, contention, confusion, and wars produced in the various parts of the empire, by a horrid abuse of religion, are symbolically represented by the voices, the thunderings, and the lightnings which followed the casting of the fire upon the earth.

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxi. [2] Ib., c. xxv.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ANGELS HOLDING THE FOUR WINDS.

Revelations, vii.

The Earth—the Trees—the Winds—the Sea—the time when the Winds begin to blow—Historical illustration.

We now return to the symbolic tempest of chapter vii.

"And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads."[1]

As the earth is the Roman empire, the symbolic terms to be explained, are the winds, the sea, and the trees.

Trees, in the idiom of prophecy, generally signify individuals or the inhabitants of a country. Thus in the following passage of Ezekiel[2] they are people, "All the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish."

Winds signify wars and invasions of a hostile people. "At that time shall it be said to this people and Jerusalem, a dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of My people, not to fan, nor to cleanse, even a full wind from those high places shall come unto me." This wind is explained in the next

[1] Rev. vii. [2] Ezekiel, xvii. 24; compare Isaiah, ii. 13, x. 19; Mat. iii. 10, vii. 17.

verse to be a hostile invasion. "Behold he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles."[1] And again: [2]"Upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them towards all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies." The invasion of Babylon by the Medes, the Persians, and other nations, is likewise foretold under the figure of a destroying wind. [3]"Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up against Babylon and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against Me, a destroying wind; and will send unto Babylon fanners that will fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about."

The sea is the symbol of a multitude of people, or nations. Waters represent, as we are expressly told in the seventeenth chapter of the prophecy, peoples, or nations. "The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." Now as the sea is the gathering together of waters, it will represent an assemblage of nations; and as winds represent wars and hostile invasions, the sea, agitated by the winds, is a people or nations at war among themselves, or impelled on another people with destructive and overwhelming force. This is the meaning of the sea stirred up by the winds, in the propecies of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

The nations which God causes to come up against Tyre, to destroy it, are compared to the waves of the sea, and are called the "deep:" "Therefore[4] thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. . . . For thus saith the Lord God, when I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited; when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee."

The destruction of Babylon is thus foretold by Jeremiah:[5]

[1] Jer. iv. 13. [2] Ib., xlix. 36. [3] Ib., li. 1, 2.
[4] Ezekiel, xxvi. 3, 19. [5] Jeremiah, l. 9, 41; li. 11, 27, 42.

"In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord. . . Remove out of the midst of Babylon. . For, lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon, an assembly of great nations from the north country. . . . Many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth." Then some of the nations, as "The Medes." The kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz, are mentioned; and their invasion is "a destroying wind," and they are themselves a "sea." "The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof."

The same symbols, and in the same meaning, are in Daniel's prophecies. [1] "Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove on the great sea, and four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another."

These four, which are four kings, "Arise," says Bishop Newton,[2] "out of a stormy and tempestuous sea," that is, out of the waves and commotions of the world. This is the explanation which is generally given of these symbolical winds and sea. Mede having cited the passage from Daniel, says, "that is, out of the conflict of the nations everywhere fighting together and striving for the dominion and empire, there arose four great kingdoms."

The meaning, then, of the vision,[3] may be thus stated: The earth is the Roman empire—the trees its inhabitants—the sea, the outlying barbaric nations beyond the Rhine, the Danube, and Euphrates, &c., at rest or peace with respect to the empire, but on the eve of being fiercely agitated and ready to burst in upon it, like the sea when impelled upon the land by a furious tempest. The tempest itself is symbolically represented as restrained by the four angels, holding the four winds of the earth, till the servants of God are sealed.

The following notes of the time when the winds began to blow, may be collected from the Apocalyptic visions compared with those of Ezekiel. I.—The tempest appears to begin soon after the sealing. For the angels are ready to let the winds

[1] Daniel, vii. 2. [2] Diss. on Daniel, vii. [3] Rev. vii. 1.

loose, but, by the command of the angel, they are prevented from doing so till the sealing has been accomplished. II.—As Ezekiel's vision of marking the men who sighed and cried for the abominations done in Jerusalem, and of scattering the coals over the city, correspond with the sealing, and the casting of the fire on the earth; and as the time of Ezekiel's visions is the same, or nearly so, it appears probable, that those of St. John are likewise synchronous, or nearly so. III.—The sealing was finished at the end of the half hour, when the angel casts the fire from the altar on the earth. The winds, therefore, were let loose, when, or soon after, the fire was cast on the earth, or when the voices and thunderings began to be heard.

What we are, then, required to prove is: that the barbaric nations which lay beyond the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, &c., girdling the earth like a sea, began to be agitated and impelled on the Roman empire, about the time its internal peace was destroyed by religious quarrels and wars.

The Donatist schism commenced in the year 315, and the Arian controversy, which soon involved the empire in strife and confusion, in 317; and the barbaric nations, who had been quiet for nearly fifty years, renewed their attacks about the same time.

"The Goths," says Gibbon, "who in the time of Claudius had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now (A. D. 322) restored by a peace of nearly fifty years; and a new generation had arisen who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days: the Sarmatians of the lake Mæotis followed the Gothic standards either as subjects, or as allies; and their united forces were poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campona, Margus, and Bononia appear to have been the scene of several memorable battles; and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchase an ignominious retreat, by restoring the prisoners and booty which they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to chastise as well as repulse the insolent barbarians who had dared to invade the territories of Rome. At the head of his legions he passed the Danube, after repairing the bridge

which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia; and when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths."

The Gothic war was renewed in 331. The Sarmatians, oppressed by the Goths, appealed to Constantine; and, as he dreaded the growing power of the Goths, whose empire extended from the Euxine to the confines of Germany, he determined to succour the weaker party. The moment his resolution was known,

"The Goths," says Gibbon, "passed the Danube and spread terror and devastation through the province of Mœsia. To oppose the inroad of this destroying host, the aged emperor took the field in person; but on this occasion either his conduct or his fortune betrayed the glory which he had acquired in so many foreign and domestic wars. He had the misfortune of seeing his troops fly before an inconsiderable detachment of the barbarians, who pursued them to the edge of their fortified camp, and obliged him to consult his safety by a precipitate and ignominious retreat. The event of a second and a more successful action retrieved the honour of the Roman arms, and the powers of art and discipline prevailed, after an obstinate contest, over the efforts of irregular valour."[1]

Constantine died in 337, and was succeeded in the east by his son Constantius, who became afterward, by the death of his brother, sole emperor.

"During the long period of the reign of Constantius, (337-360) the provinces of the east were afflicted by the calamities of the Persian war. The irregular incursions of the light troops alternately spread terror and devastation beyond the Tigris and beyond the Euphrates, from the gates of Ctesiphon to those of Antioch; and this active service was performed by the Arabs of the desert. . . The armies of Rome and Persia encountered each other in nine bloody fields, in all of which Constantius himself commanded in person. The event of the day was most commonly adverse to the Romans. . . . The sincerity of history declares that the Romans were vanquished with a dreadful slaughter (in the battle of Singara, A. D. 348) and that the flying remnant of the legions were exposed to the most intolerable hardships."[2]

[1] Decline and Fall, xiv., 104; xviii., 348, &c.
[2] Ib. xviii., 355, 363, compare c. xxvi.

While Sapor was engaged in the siege of Nisibis, a formidable invasion of the Massagetæ compelled him to raise it, and "march with rapid diligence from the banks of the Tigris to those of the Oxus." "The dangers and difficulties of the Scythian war engaged him soon afterward to conclude, or at least to observe, a truce with the Roman emperor, which was equally grateful to both princes; as Constantius himself, after the death of his two brothers, was involved by the revolutions of the west in a civil contest, which required, and seemed to exceed, the most vigorous exertion of his individual strength."

This was the civil war with Magnentius, who assumed the purple in the year 350. Magnentius was defeated A. D. 351, in the battle of Mursa, when fifty-four thousand of the troops of the empire perished. "The distractions of civil war, and the irreparable loss which the Roman legions sustained in the battle of Mursa, exposed these (the Illyrian) countries to the light cavalry of the barbarians."[1]

"Before the wounds of the civil discord could be healed, the provinces of Gaul were overwhelmed by a deluge of barbarians. The Sarmatians no longer respected the barrier of the Danube. The impunity of rapine had increased the boldness and numbers of the wild Isaurians to ravage the adjacent country. . . . Above all, the Persian monarch, elated by victory, again threatened the peace of the empire, and the presence of the emperor was indispensable both in the west and in the east."[2]

In 355, Constantius made Julian, his cousin, Cæsar, and sent him to the Rhine to defend the provinces against the incursions of the Alemanni and other German tribes.

Julian succeeded Constantius, who died in November, 361. The war with Sapor still continuing, the emperor invaded the Persian territories in April, 363; he was compelled to retreat on the 16th of June, and, on the 26th of the same month, was mortally wounded.

But these invasions of the Persians, the Sarmatians, Germans, Goths, and other barbarians, were but as the gathering clouds, and distant moanings of the approaching storm; nor were the

[1] Decline and Fall, xix. [2] Ib.

winds fully let loose, lashing the sea into foam and driving it in impetuous billows on the land till the blast of the first trumpet; when the whole barbaric world appeared in violent commotion, and the savage nations of Germany and Scythia issuing from the remote north and the far east, having burst the barriers of the Roman empire, continued, during many centuries, to pass and repass her territories in ceaseless ebb and flow, sweeping away, in their destructive course, the produce of her fertile provinces, her inhabitants, her cities, and the most precious monuments of art, of learning, and of genius.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SEVEN ANGELS WITH THE SEVEN TRUMPETS PREPARING THEMSELVES TO SOUND.—*Revelation, viii.*

"AND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. . . . And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound."

In the seventh chapter, 12,000 out of every tribe of Israel is sealed, indicating, as in Ezekiel's vision,[1] the preservation of some and the ruin of the many; and it has been shown that at the time of this vision, Christianity was being exceedingly corrupted, and religion made every where the pretext for rapine, violence, and murder. In the eighth chapter, the pouring out of Divine vengeance on an idolatrous and depraved people, is symbolically represented by the angel filling the censer with fire from the altar and casting it on the earth; as the destruction of Jerusalem is symbolically represented by the man, clothed[2] with linen, taking coals of fire in his hand and scattering them over the city. Moreover, it has been seen that the Lord is waging a war of vengeance against the kings of the earth, and against the beast whose seat is that great city on the seven hills, that reigneth over the kings of the earth. This war which had been long and fearfully carried on, but which seems to have relaxed for a moment, begins to rage with irresistible fury on the sounding of the first trumpet, and continues to the close of the seventh, through the long remaining period of the "day of vengeance."[3]

[1] Ezekiel, ix. [2] Ib. x.

[3] The sounding of the seven trumpets seems to allude to the blowing of the horns before Jericho, and its fall to be a type of the events represented by the Apostle. For, as on the blowing of the horns on the seventh day, the city falls and the enemies of the Lord are slain; so, when the seventh trumpet is sounded, the mystery of God is finished; that great city, Babylon, is thrown down with violence; the destroyers of the earth are destroyed, and the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.—Rev. x., 7; xviii., 21; xi., 15, 18. See Vitringa on this vision.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FIRST TRUMPET.

The First Angel sounds—the Storm of Hail and Fire mingled with Blood—the Third of the Earth burnt—the Third of the Trees—and all the Green Grass.

"THE first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast on the earth; and the third part of the earth was burnt up, and the third part of the trees, and all the green grass was burnt up."

The third part of the earth or of the Roman empire, which is devastated by the storm, is either her territories in Europe, Asia, or Africa: as, according to Josephus and others, her dominions in any of these quarters of the world, were called a third of the earth or the world.[1]

Storms and winds, as has been seen, represent invasions. It is therefore to be shown from history, that the whole of the provinces of one of the three great divisions of the empire in Europe, Asia, or Africa, were overrun by barbarians at the Apocalyptic period, indicated by the sounding of the first trumpet; and that the symbolical grass (the inferior people) suffered far more severely than the symbolical trees (the wealthy or the nobles).

It does not appear from the prophecy on what part of the empire the storm bursts, but as hail comes from the north, it is most likely to be Europe: and this is confirmed by the event.

THE HISTORICAL ILLUSTRATION.

"In the disastrous period of the fall of the Roman empire, which," says Gibbon,[2] "may be justly dated from the reign of Valens, the happi-

[1] "As for the third part of the habitable earth, (Africa) whose nations are so many," &c.—Wars, b. ii., xvi.

"Aut Libyæ, aut Asiæ latus, aut pars tertia rerum."—Sil. Ital. cited in Ainsworth's Latin Dictionary.

[2] Decline and Fall, xxvi.

ness and the security of each individual were personally attacked; and the arts and labours of ages were rudely defaced by the barbarians of Scythia and Germany. The invasion of the Huns precipitated on the provinces of the west the Gothic nation, who advanced in less than forty years from the Danube to the Atlantic, and opened a way by the success of their arms to the inroads of so many hostile tribes more savage than themselves."

The original principle of motion was concealed in the remote countries of the north.

"The ancient,[1] perhaps original, seat of the Huns, who, under the reign[2] of Valens, threatened the empire of Rome, was an extensive, though dry and barren, tract of country, immediately on the north side of the great wall (of China). Their place is at present occupied by the forty-nine hordes or banners of the Mongous, a pastoral nation, which consists of about two hundred thousand families."

The dominion of the Huns extended far towards the west, and was bounded on the east by the ocean, and on the north by the north sea.

Their vast empire having been destroyed by the Sienpi, the great body of the nation submitted to the conquerors; but a horde of 250,000, preferring flight to submission, passed the Imaus, and then separated; a part settled in Sogdiana, east of the Caspian sea; the second division continued their march westward. The Alans, who "pitched their tents" between the Volga and the Don, opposed the Huns on the banks of the latter river, and were defeated in a fierce and bloody battle. The greater part of the vanquished people joined the conquerors, who gladly received and adopted so warlike a nation. A colony, however, retreated into Mount Caucasus, where they still preserve their name and independence; and another,

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. iii. c. xxvi.

[2] "The region which the Scythians occupied, extended about 5,000 miles from the mouths of the Danube to the Sea of Japan. Its latitude from the wall of China to the very cold regions of the north, was, perhaps, a thousand miles."—Decline and Fall, c. xxvi., p. 334, &c.

advancing towards the Baltic, shared with the Germans the first spoils of the empire. The Huns,[1] greatly strengthened by the junction of the Alans and some other tribes, attacked the Goths, whose sway reached from the Euxine to the Baltic. The Goths were defeated in several engagements; and so terrified by the ferocity and hideous aspect of the victors, that the bulk of the nation, seized with a panic, rushed to the banks of the Danube; believing they could not be saved, unless its broad stream were interposed between them and their dreaded foe.

"In the year 376,[2] the emperor Valens, when at Antioch," says Gibbon, "was informed that the north was agitated by a furious tempest; that the irruption of the Huns, an unknown and monstrous race of savages had subverted the power of the Goths; and that the suppliant multitude of that warlike nation, whose pride was now humbled to the dust, covered a space of many miles along the banks of the river." They supplicated for an asylum; and they protested, if they were permitted to cultivate the waste lands of Thrace, they would be faithful to the empire in peace and in war. Valens consented to give them the settlement they desired, on these, and the additional, conditions of delivering up their arms and their children as hostages. The condition of giving up their arms was eluded; and 200,000 Gothic warriors, with arms in their hands, and their families, in all about one million of people, were transported by the Roman government into the heart of the empire.

Misunderstandings, acts of injustice, mutual jealousies and complaints, soon sprung up between the Goths and Romans, which were speedily followed by war. Shortly after its commencement, the Goths retreated towards the most southern mouth of the Danube, where they engaged the Romans in a bloody and doubtful battle.[3] "The imperial generals," says

[1] "The numbers, the strength, the rapid motions, and the implacable fury of the Huns, were felt and dreaded, and magnified by the astonished Goths; who beheld their fields and villages consumed with flames, and deluged with indiscriminate slaughter. To these real terrors, they added the surprise and abhorrence which were excited by the shrill voice, uncouth gestures, and the strange deformity of the Huns."—Decline and Fall, c. xxxvi.

[2] Decline and Fall, vol. iii., c. xxvi.,

[3] Ib. vol. iii., xxvi.,

Gibbon, "prepared to confine the Visigoths in the narrow angle of land between the Danube and the desert of Scythia and mountains of Hæmus, till their strength and spirit should be insensibly wasted by the inevitable operation of famine."[1]

But new swarms of barbarians, passing the unguarded Danube, the Romans were compelled to retreat. The Goths immediately broke up their camp, and, being joined by hordes of Ostrogoths, Taifalæ, Huns, Alans, and Sarmatians, devastated the country from the Danube to the Hellespont. A decisive battle was at last fought near Hadrianople, on the 9th of August, A. D. 376. between the Goths and Romans, when the latter were routed, Valens slain, and two-thirds of his army cut to pieces.

"The Goths," says Gibbon, "were now undisputed masters of the provinces from Constantinople to the foot of the Julian Alps. The important pass of Succi was betrayed by the fear or the misconduct of Maurus; and the barbarians who had no longer any resistance to apprehend from the scattered and vanquished troops of the empire, spread themselves over the face of a fertile and cultivated country, as far as the confines of the Hadriatic Sea."[2]

Theodosius the Great, who succeeded Valens, reduced the Goths, after a war of three years; they continued faithful to him as long as he lived, but on his death, A. D. 395, they revolted a second time.

Alaric was now their king or leader. In 396, he traversed the plains of Macedonia and Thessaly without resistance, and entered Greece by the unguarded straits of Thermopylæ.

"The fertile fields of Phocis and Bæotia,"[3] says Gibbon, "were instantly covered by a deluge of barbarians, who massacred the males of an age to bear arms, and drove away the beautiful females with the spoil and cattle of the flaming villages. The whole territory of Attica, from the promontory of Sunium to the town of Megara, was blasted by his baleful presence. . . . The confidence of the cities of Peloponnesus in their natural rampart had tempted them to neglect the care of their antique walls. . . . Corinth, Argos, Sparta, yielded without resistance to the arms of the Goths; and the most fortunate of the inhabitants

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxvi. [2] Ib. [3] Ib., c. xxx.

were saved, by death, from beholding the slavery of their families, and the conflagration of their cities."[1]

Alaric invaded Italy in the year 400.

"The scarcity of fact," says Gibbon,[2] "and the uncertainty of dates, oppose our attempt to describe the first invasion of Italy, by the arms of Alaric; his march, perhaps, from Thessalonica through the warlike and hostile country of Pannonia, as far as the foot of the Julian Alps; his passage of these mountains which were strongly guarded by troops and entrenchments; the siege of Aquileia and the conquest of the provinces of Istria and Venetia, appear to have employed a considerable time. Unless his operations were extremely cautious and slow, the length of the interval would suggest a probable suspicion that the Gothic king retreated towards the banks of the Danube with fresh swarms of barbarians, before he again attempted to penetrate into the heart of Italy, and reinforced his army."

The Goths having been defeated at Pollentia and Verona, Alaric was compelled to retreat from Italy.

"In the year 405," says Gibbon,[3] "the north must again have been agitated and alarmed by an invasion of the Huns; and the nations who retreated before them must have pressed with incumbent weight on the confines of Germany. The inhabitants of those regions which the ancients have assigned to the Suevi, the Vandals, and the Burgundians, might embrace the resolution of abandoning to the fugitives of Sarmatia their woods and morasses; or at least to discharge their superfluous numbers on the provinces of the empire . . . The Vandals, the Suevi, and the Burgundians formed the strength of this mighty host; but the Alans, who had found a hospitable reception in their new seat, added their active cavalry to the heavy infantry of the Germans; and the Gothic adventurers crowded so eagerly to the standard of Radagaisus, that by some historians he has been styled the king of the Goths. The whole multitude, which was no less than two hundred thousand fighting men, might be increased by the accession of women and children, to the amount of

[1] "The invasion of the Goths, instead of vindicating the honour, contributed, at least accidentally, to extirpate the last remains of Paganism; and the mysteries of Ceres, which had subsisted eighteen hundred years, did not survive the destruction of Eleusis, and the calamities of Greece."—Decline and Fall, c. xxx.

[2] Decline and Fall, c. xxx. [3] Ib., c. xxx.

four hundred thousand persons. This formidable emigration issued from the same coast of the Baltic which had poured forth the myriads of the Cimbri and the Teutones, to assail Rome and Italy in the vigour of the Republic. . . . The correspondence of nations was, in that age, so imperfect and precarious that the revolutions of the north might escape the knowledge of the court of Ravenna, till the cloud which was collected along the coast of the Baltic, burst in thunder upon the banks of the Upper Danube. . . . The safety of Rome was entrusted to the counsels and the sword of Stilicho. . . . The king of the confederate Germans passed without resistance, the Alps, the Po and the Apennines; leaving, on the one hand, the inaccessible palace of Honorius, securely buried among the marshes of Ravenna; and on the other, the camp of Stilicho, who had fixed his head quarters at Ticinum or Pavia, but who seems to have avoided a decisive battle till he had assembled his distant forces. Many cities of Italy were pillaged or destroyed; and the siege of Florence by Radagaisus is one of the earliest events in that celebrated republic, whose firmness checked and delayed the unskilful fury of the barbarians."

Radagaisus was defeated and taken prisoner by Stilicho.

"After his defeat, two parts of the German host, which must have exceeded the number of one hundred thousand men, still remained in arms between the Apennine and the Alps, or between the Alps and the Danube. It is uncertain whether they attempted to revenge the death of their general; but their irregular fury was soon diverted by the prudence and firmness of Stilicho, who opposed their march and facilitated their retreat; who considered the safety of Rome and Italy as the great object of his care, and who sacrificed, with too much indifference, the wealth and tranquillity of the distant provinces. The barbarians acquired from some Pannonian deserters, the knowledge of the country and of the roads; and the invasion of Gaul which Alaric had designed, was executed by the remains of the great army of Radagaisus. . . . On the last day of the year, in a season when the waters of the Rhine were most probably frozen, they entered without opposition the defenceless provinces of Gaul. This memorable passage of the Suevi, the Vandals, the Alani, and the Burgundians, who never afterward retreated, may be considered the fall of the Roman empire in the countries beyond the Alps; and the barriers which had so long separated the savage and the civilized nations of the earth, were from that fatal moment levelled to the ground. . . . The banks of the Rhine were crowned, like those of the Tiber, with elegant

houses and well cultivated farms; and if a poet descended the river, he might express his doubt on which side was situated the territory of the Romans. This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly turned into a desert; and the prospect of the smoking ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man. The flourishing city of Mentz was surprised and destroyed, and many thousand Christians were inhumanly massacred in the church. Worms perished after a long and obstinate siege. Strasburg, Spires, Rheims, Tournay, Arras, Amiens, experienced the cruel oppression of the German yoke; and the consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greatest part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul. That rich and extensive country, as far as the ocean, the Alps and the Pyrrenees, was delivered to the barbarians, who drove before them in a promiscuous crowd, the bishop, the senator, and the virgin, laden with the spoils of their houses and altars."

In the year 409 this destroying host passed into Spain.

"The irruption of these nations was followed by the most dreadful calamities; as the barbarians exercised their indiscriminate cruelty on the fortunes of the Romans and the Spaniards; ravaging with equal fury the open country. The progress of famine reduced the miserable inhabitants to feed upon the flesh of their fellow-creatures; and even the wild beasts, who multiplied without control in the desert, were exasperated by the taste of blood and the impatience of hunger, boldly attacked their human prey. Pestilence soon appeared, the inseparable companion of famine."[1]

In the year 408, Alaric again invaded Italy. In 409, he was joined by his brother-in-law Adolphus, who, with reinforcements of Goths and Huns, had forced his way from the Danube to the Tiber. The Goths now advanced to Rome, which they besieged three times; the siege was raised twice, but the third time, the city was taken and given up to pillage.

"At the hour of midnight, on the 25th of August, 410, the Salarian gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the imperial city, which had subdued and civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered

[1] Decline and Fall, xxx. xxxi.

to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia. The proclamation of Alaric when he forced his entrance into the vanquished city, discovered, however, some regard for the laws of humanity and religion. He encouraged his troops boldly to sieze the rewards of valour, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of a wealthy and effeminate people: but he exhorted them, at the same time, to spare the lives of the unresisting citizens, and to respect the churches of St. Peter and St. Paul, as holy and inviolable sanctuaries."

The Goths evacuated Rome on the sixth day and advanced into the southern provinces of Italy. After reigning in Italy above four years without control, they retreated in 412, to the south of France, where they established their kingdom, which they soon extended from the Rhone to the extremity of Spain.

"THE THIRD OF THE EARTH[1] WAS BURNT UP."

The Roman "earth" was divided, as we have seen, into three parts, one of which is burnt up, and accordingly one of them, the European third, is swept by a desolating tempest of war. For, the Visigoths and their allies traversed, occupied, and wasted, nearly forty years, Lower and Upper Mæsia, Thrace, Macedonia, Thessaly, Greece, Epirus, Illyricum, Pannonia, (all the countries south of the Danube to the Julian Alps) Italy, and the southern provinces of Gaul. The host, which issued from Germany under Radagaisus, devastated the provinces from the Danube to Florence; then Gaul and Spain. The Burgundians occupied the Burgundies. The Alemanni and other tribes siezed Helvetia, Rhætia, and the countries reaching to the Danube. The Neustrian Franks were now pushing from the mouths of the Rhine through Belgium, towards the Loire; and the Austrasian Franks were seated between the Rhine and the Meuse. So that the whole of continental Europe, in its length and breadth, from Constantinople and the Black Sea to the Atlantic Ocean; from the Rhine and the Danube to Cape St. Angelo, and the extreme land of Italy and Spain was

[1] The third part of the earth is not in the authorized version; but it is undoubtedly a part of the prophecy, and it is admitted into the text of the most correct editions of the Greek Testament.

traversed, occupied, and wasted by the barbarians of Germany and Scythia.

"THE THIRD PART OF THE TREES WAS BURNT UP, AND ALL THE GREEN GRASS WAS BURNT UP."

Trees and grass represent, in symbolical language, the inhabitants of a country; and as trees[1] are frequently put for the great and lofty, the grass will signify the inferior people.

As only a third of the trees is burnt, and all the green grass, it is a part of the prophecy, that these invasions, contrary to what usually happens, would be more fatal to the meaner people than to the wealthy. Let us see how history establishes and accounts for this fact.

The first barbaric invaders were inexperienced in the art of taking walled towns. Now, the wealthiest classes in Europe, usually living (as we shall have occasion to show) in cities, or being able to flee to fortified places on the approach of danger, would enjoy a greater measure of safety than the inferior people, who generally dwelt in the country, or if they fled to the towns, would perish with those of like condition, from want of the necessaries of life.

The following examples will show the comparative safety of those who lived in walled towns, and the extreme ignorance of the Goths, the most civilized of the barbarians, in conducting sieges.

When the Goths first revolted, they besieged Hadrianople, but they were soon obliged to raise the siege.

"The resistance[2] of the garrison informed the barbarians, that in the attack of regular fortifications, the efforts of unskilful courage are seldom successful. Their general (Fritigern) acknowledged his error, raised the siege, declaring that he was at peace with stone walls,[3] and revenged his disappointment on the adjacent country."

[1] Isaiah, ii. 13; x. 18; xl. 6, 7. When Alaric was threatened with an innumerable people, exercised in arms, "*the thicker the hay, the easier it is mowed*," was his reply.

[2] Decline and Fall, c. xxvi. [3] Pacem sibi esse cum parietibus memorans.

After the battle of Hadrianople, they made a second and an equally unsuccessful attempt.

"The furious assault of the Goths was repulsed; their secret arts of treason and of treachery were discovered; and after an obstinate conflict of many hours, they retired to their tents, convinced by experience, that it would be far more advisable to observe the treaty which their sagacious leader had tacitly stipulated with the fortifications of great and populous cities. . . . The tide of the Gothic inundation rolled from the walls of Hadrianople to the suburbs of Constantinople. The barbarians were surprised with the splendid appearance of the capital of the east, the height and extent of the walls, the myriads of affrighted and wealthy citizens who crowded the ramparts, and the various prospects of the sea and land. They gazed with hopeless desire on the inaccessible beauties of Constantinople."[1]

The emperor Honorius, surprised and nearly taken prisoner by the Gothic cavalry, was compelled to seek a temporary shelter within the fortifications of Asta. "The siege of an obscure place," says Gibbon, "which contained so rich a prize, and seemed incapable of a long resistance, was instantly formed and indefatigably pressed by the king of the Goths."[2] . . . . But this obscure place baffled all the efforts of the Gothic army, until it was relieved by Stilicho.

Alaric in vain besieged Aquileia.

"The learned Rufinus, who was summoned by his enemies to appear before a Roman synod, wisely preferred the danger of a besieged city; and the barbarians who previously shook the walls of Aquileia, might save him from the cruel sentence of another heretic, who, at the request of the same bishops, was severely whipped and condemned to perpetual exile on a desert island."

But while the wealthy, who lived in cities, or could fly to places of refuge, were safe, the inhabitants of the country, as Gibbon writes in continuation, were "exposed to the undistinguishing blaze of war."

"The *old man*, who had passed his simple and innocent life in the neighbourhood of Verona, was a stranger to the quarrels both of kings

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxvi. p. 375. [2] Ib. xxx. vol. v. p. 45.

and of bishops; his pleasure, his desires, his knowledge, were confined within the little circle of his paternal farm, and a staff supported his aged steps, on the same ground where he had sported his infancy. Yet, even this humble and rustic felicity (which Claudian describes with so much truth and feeling) was still exposed to the undistinguishing blaze of war. His trees, his old contemporary trees, must blaze in the conflagration of the whole country; a detachment of Gothic cavalry might sweep away his cottage and his family; and the power of Alaric could destroy this happiness, which he was not able either to taste, or to bestow."[1]

The wealthy Romans had large estates in Sicily, in Africa, and in Asia, where many of them fled and found safety, for the first barbaric invaders could not cross the sea.

"The most timid," says Gibbon,[2] "when Alaric invaded Italy, who had already embarked their valuable effects, meditated their escape to the island of Sicily or the African coast. . . . . The ample patrimonies[3] which many senatorian families possessed in Africa, invited them, if they had time and prudence, to escape from the ruin of their country, to embrace the shelter of that hospitable province. . . . . The Italian fugitives were dispersed through the provinces, along the coast of Egypt and Asia, as far as Constantinople and Jerusalem."[4]

Alaric readily spared the inhabitants of a city, on the payment of a sufficient ransom; but the open country was uniformly devastated.

"As soon as the Athenians[5] heard the voice of the Gothic herald, they were easily persuaded to deliver the greatest part of their wealth, as the ransom of the city of Minerva and of its inhabitants. The treaty was ratified by solemn oaths, and observed with mutual fidelity. . . .

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxx. [2] Ib. xxx. [3] Ib. xxxi.

[4] The Goths could not cross the sea. "No sooner," says Gibbon, "had Alaric reached the extreme land of Italy, than he was attracted by the neighbouring prospect of a fertile and peaceful island. Yet even the possession of Sicily he considered only as an immediate step to the important expedition which he meditated against the continent of Africa. . . . As soon as the first division of the Goths embarked, a sudden tempest arose, which sunk or scattered many of the transports; their courage was daunted by the terrors of a new element; and the whole design was defeated by the premature death of Alaric, which fixed, after a short illness, the fatal term of his conquests."—Decline and Fall, c. xxxi.

[5] Ib. vol. iv., c. xxx., p. 33.

But the whole territory of Attica, from the promontory of Sunium to the town of Megara, was blasted by his baleful presence."

Alaric besieged Rome three times, admitting it twice to terms of composition; the third time it was taken. The populace suffered greatly by famine and other casualties; it is, however, said, that when it was taken only one senator perished.

"The writers best disposed to exaggerate the clemency of the Goths have very freely confessed, that a cruel slaughter was made of the Romans, and that the streets of the city were filled with dead bodies, which remained without burial during the general consternation. . . . . Whatever might be the numbers of the equestrian or plebeian rank, who perished in the massacre of Rome, it is confidently affirmed, that only one senator lost his life by the sword of the enemy."[1]

The Goths evacuated Rome on the sixth day. "At the head of an army encumbered with rich and weighty spoils, their intrepid leader advanced along the Appian way into the southern provinces of Italy, destroying whatever dared to oppose his passage, and contenting himself with the plunder of the unresisting country."

To recapitulate: The prophecy foretells that a third of the earth, all the grass, and a third of the trees would be burnt by a furious hail storm. It has been shown, that storms, represent invading armies—that the earth is the provinces of the Roman empire from the Rhine to the Euphrates—that it was divided into three parts, Europe, Asia and Africa—that grass represents the inferior people, and trees, the rich and great: and it has been shown from history and in the chronological order of the prophecy, that the European third was devastated by barbarians—that the inferior people and the inhabitants of the open country were destroyed by famine, or the undistinguishing blaze of war—while many of the rich dwelling in, or escaping to the cities, the islands, Africa, and Asia, enjoyed a comparative safety.

[1] Decline and Fall, xxxi.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE SECOND TRUMPET.

The Second Angel sounds—the Burning Mountain cast into the Sea—the Third part of the Sea becomes Blood—the Third part of the Creatures in the Sea—of the Ships.

"AND the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood; and the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed."

In the symbolical language of scripture, a mountain is a kingdom;[1] and a burning mountain, a great tyrannical kingdom, which will be soon dissolved and brought to ruin. Thus, Babylon is called a "destroying mountain," and when her power is subverted, a "burnt mountain."[2] "I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldee, all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the Lord. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the Lord, which destroyest all the earth; and I will stretch out my hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain."

THE THIRD PART OF THE CREATURES WHICH WERE IN THE SEA, AND HAD LIFE, DIED.

When nations are represented by waters or the sea, the living things are the inhabitants of the countries, which are regarded as waters. Thus, in the twenty-ninth chapter of Ezekiel, the land and cities of Egypt are a river, or rivers, Pharoah is a dragon,[3] and the Egyptians, fish. "Speak and say, thus saith the Lord

[1] Isaiah, ii., 14; xli., 15. Ps. lxxii., 3. [2] Jer. li., 24, 25.
[3] The crocodile. Among the ancients it was the symbol of Egypt.

God, behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon that liest in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, my river is mine own and I have made it for myself. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers, &c."[1] This is explained in the tenth verse, &c., to be the desolation of the land and cities of Egypt. "I am against thee, and against thy rivers, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate. . . . And the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years."

Ships represent wealth and the instruments of wealth and luxury. "The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud. . . . And upon all the ships of Tarshish, and upon all pleasant pictures."[2] "The words here," says the elder Lowth, "joined with what follows, denote the destruction of all fine and elegant furniture, and those rarities which are brought by sea from foreign parts, in which men are apt to pride themselves."—(compare Rev. xviii., 17, 19.)

As a burning mountain is cast into the sea, a third of which becomes blood, the meaning is that a great kingdom, which is itself soon to be destroyed, will fall on many other nations or peoples with irresistible violence, causing vast destruction and loss of life.

This formidable power was Attila and his Huns.

"The western world," says Gibbon, "was oppressed by the Goths and Vandals, who fled before the Huns; but the achievements of the Huns themselves were not adequate to their power and prosperity. Their victorious hordes had spread from the Volga to the Danube; but the public force was exhausted by the discord of independent chieftains; their valour was idly consumed in obscure and predatory excursions. . . . In the reign of Attila, the Huns became again the terror of the world. . . And urged the rapid downfall of the Roman empire.

"Attila, the son of Mundzuck, deduced his noble, perhaps his regal, descent, from the ancient Huns, who had formerly contended with the monarchs of China. His features, according to the observation of a

[1] Ezek. xxix. 3, 4, 5, 10, &c.; compare xlvii. 9, 10. [2] Is. ii. 12, 16.

Gothic historian, bore the stamp of his national origin; and the portrait of Attila exhibits the genuine deformity of a modern Calmuck; a large head, a swarthy complexion, small deep-seated eyes, a flat nose, a few hairs in the place of a beard, broad shoulders, and a short body, of nervous strength, though of a disproportioned form. The haughty step and demeanour of the king of the Huns expressed the consciousness of his superiority above the rest of mankind; and he had a custom of fiercely rolling his eyes, as if he wished to enjoy the terror which he inspired. Flesh was his only food: he never tasted the luxury of bread. He boasted that the grass never grew on the spot where his horse had trodden."

This formidable barbarian could bring into the field seven hundred thousand warriors.

The sea, as we have seen, is the outlying barbaric nations which surrounded the empire. The burning mountain is cast into the sea, and the third part of it becomes blood.

Attila was "the terror of the world," crushing all the barbarians who dared to oppose him. But as only the third of the sea is the subject of the prophecy, our attention must be directed and confined to it.

It has been seen in the exposition of the first trumpet, that the European third of the empire was traversed and occupied by the barbaric nations, chiefly of Germany; the sea, then, having broken in upon and covered a third of the earth, this third is regarded as so much of the sea. Now it was this quarter that Attila invaded, and the countries occupied by the barbarians were exposed to his most furious assaults.

The million of Goths whom Valens had transported over the Danube, were joined, immediately after their revolt, by innumerable swarms of kindred and other barbarians; but having been induced by Theodosius the Great, to submit, they obtained (and no doubt many of their allies) settlements in Thrace, Mæsia, and the adjacent countries. When they revolted a second time, and invaded Greece and Italy, the bulk of the nation must have remained behind in the lands where they had been placed on their submission; for, their marches and operations render it impossible, that they could have been accompanied by a vast and promiscuous multitude.

Stilicho, the Roman general, had surrounded and cooped the

Goths in a corner of the Peloponnesus, yet Alaric contrived to elude his vigilance, escape from the toils that encircled him, perform a difficult march of thirty miles, and transport his troops with their spoils and captives over an arm of the sea, before his movements were known to his adversary.[1]

These complicated operations require us to suppose that a chosen part only of the Gothic nation followed Alaric in this expedition. And when he invaded Italy he must have been accompanied chiefly by fighting men. For his march lay through the hostile and warlike province of Pannonia, and he passed the Julian Alps, which were strongly guarded by troops and entrenchments. The majority of the Gothic people, increased by their friends and allies, would, therefore, appear to have remained in Mæsia, Thrace, &c., mingled with the Roman population and other barbaric occupants.

Again; on the second revolt of the Goths, the barriers of the Danube were broken down, and torrents of barbarians were perpetually pouring into the Illyrian provinces. "The unhappy natives to the south of the Danube," as Gibbon says, "submitted to the calamities which, in the course of twenty years, were almost grown familiar to their imagination, and the various troops of barbarians who gloried in the Gothic name, were irregularly spread from the woody shores of Dalmatia to the walls of Constantinople."

Now it was on the provinces thus inundated by these promiscuous hordes, who were at this time often the allies of Rome, that Attila first fell. And the Roman armies that encountered him were composed chiefly of barbarians; for, the military spirit of the Romans having long since disappeared, the legions were necessarily recruited from, and generally commanded by, barbarians.

Gibbon thus describes the first irruption of the Huns in the year 441:—

[1] "To extricate himself from the prison of the Peloponnesus it was necessary," says Gibbon, "that he should pierce the entrenchments which surrounded his camp, that he should perform a difficult and dangerous march of thirty miles, as far as the gulph of Corinth, and that he should transport his troops, his captives, and his spoil over an arm of the sea, which, in the narrow interval between Rhium and the opposite shore, is at least half a mile in breadth."—Decline and Fall, c. xxx.

"The Illyrian frontier was covered by a line of castles and fortresses. . . . These slight obstacles were instantly swept away by the inundation of the Huns. They destroyed with fire and sword the populous cities of Sirmium and Singidunum, of Ratiaria and Marcianopolis, of Naissus and Sardica. . . . The whole breadth of Europe, as it extends above five hundred miles from the Euxine to the Hadriatic, was at once invaded, and occupied, and desolated by the myriads of barbarians, whom Attila led into the field. . . . A military force was collected in Europe, formidable by their arms and their numbers, if the generals had understood the science of command, and their soldiers the duty of obedience. The armies of the Eastern Empire were vanquished in three successive engagements; and the progress of Attila may be traced by the fields of battle. The two former on the banks of the Utus, and under the walls of Marcianopolis were fought in the extensive plains between the Danube and Mount Hæmus. As the Romans were pressed by a victorious enemy, they gradually and unskilfully retired towards the Chersonesus of Thrace; and that narrow peninsula, the last extremity of the land, was marked by their third and irreparable defeat. By the destruction of this army, Attila acquired the indisputable possession of the field. From the Hellespont to Thermopylæ, and the suburbs of Constantinople, he ravaged without resistance and without mercy, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia; Heraclea and Hadrianople, might, perhaps, escape this dreadful irruption of the Huns, but the words the most expressive of total extirpation and erasure, are applied to the calamities which they inflicted on seventy cities of the Eastern Empire."[1]

In the year 450, Attila invaded the western empire. His march was directed through the provinces which had been overrun and occupied by the barbarians; and the innumerable host that defeated him in the battle of Chalons was composed chiefly of the barbaric tribes.

"The hostile myriads were poured," says Gibbon, "with resistless violence into the Belgic provinces. The consternation of Gaul was universal. . . As the greatest part of the Gallic cities were alike destitute of saints and soldiers, they were beseiged and stormed by the Huns; who practised in the example of Metz their customary maxims of war. They involved in a promiscuous massacre, the priests who served at the

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxxiv.

altar, and the infants who, in the hour of danger, had been providently baptized by the bishop; the flourishing city was delivered to the flames, and a solitary chapel of St. Stephen marked the place where it formerly stood. From the Rhine and the Moselle, Attila advanced into the heart of Gaul, crossed the Seine at Auxerre, and after a laborious march, fixed his camp under the walls of Orleans."

He was compelled to raise the siege of Orleans by the advance of Œtius, the Roman general, and Theodoric, the king of the Visigoths. He retired to the plains of Chalons, where he was defeated in a great battle, described as—

"*Fierce, various, obstinate, and bloody; and such as could not be paralleled either in the present or past ages.* The numbers of the slain amounted to one hundred and sixty-two thousand; or, according to another account, three hundred thousand persons; and these incredible exaggerations suppose a real and effective loss."[1]

Gibbon informs us that

"The army which arrested his progress and compelled him to retreat was composed of various tribes and nations. The Visigoths, who at that time were in the mature vigour of their fame and power, obeyed with alacrity the signal of war; prepared their arms and horses, and assembled under the standard of their aged king, who was resolved with his two eldest sons, Torismond and Theodoric, to command in person his numerous and valiant people. . . The indefatigable diligence of the patrician (Œtius) gradually collected the troops of Gaul and Germany, who had formerly acknowledged themselves the subjects or soldiers of the republic, but now claimed the rewards of voluntary service, and the rank of independent allies. The Læti, the Armoricans, the Breones, the Saxons, the Burgundians, and the Franks, who followed Meroveus as their lawful prince. Such was the various army, which, under the conduct of Œtius and Theodoric, advanced by rapid marches to relieve Orleans, and to give battle to the innumerable host of Attila."

After the defeat of Attila, "The imperial general," says Gibbon, "when he contemplated the bloody scene, observed with secret satisfaction, that the loss had principally fallen on

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxxv. vol. iv. p. 295.

the barbarians. The body of Theodoric, pierced with honourable wounds, was discovered under a heap of slain."

In the year 452 Attila crossed the Alps and invaded Italy. The Alemanni occupied Helvetia, a part of Rhætia, and some of the territories beyond the Rhine. The Bavarians, the allies of Rome, and other barbarians, occupied Bavaria and a part of modern Austria. As Attila marched from Thuringia, he must, both in his advance and retreat, have fallen heavily on the barbarians who were in his line of march, and not his allies.

He besieged Aquileia, which was defended by the citizens, assisted by Gothic auxiliaries. It was taken after a siege of three months, and the succeeding generation could scarcely discover the ruins of Aquileia. After this dreadful chastisement, (Gibbon tells us) Attila pursued his march; and, as he passed, the cities of Altinum, Concordia, and Padua, were reduced into heaps of stones and ashes. The inland towns, Vicenza, Verona, and Bergamo, were exposed to the rapacious cruelty of the Huns; Milan and Pavia submitted without resistance to the loss of their wealth. Attila spread his ravages over the rich plains of modern Lombardy, which are divided by the Po, and bounded by the Alps and the Apennine.

He then granted peace to the Romans, evacuated Italy, and withdrew to his wooden palace beyond the Danube, where he died A. D. 453.

His death was immediately followed by the dissolution of his mighty empire.

His eldest surviving son, Dengisich, invaded the eastern empire, was defeated, and, falling in battle, his head was ignominiously exposed in the Hippodrome of Constantinople. His youngest son, "Irnac, with his subject hordes, retired into the heart of Lesser Scythia, they were soon overwhelmed by a torrent of new barbariaus, who followed the same road which their own ancestors had formerly discovered."

THE THIRD OF THE SEA BECAME BLOOD, ETC.

It is scarcely necessary to illustrate the part of the prophecy by special historical proofs, sufficient evidence having been already given in detail, to prove the furious and bloody cha-

racter of Attila's invasions. One passage, however, as it is short, may be cited, in order to show the spirit of his allies or subjects.

"The Thuringians served in the army of Attila. They traversed, both in their march and in their return, the territories of the Franks; and it was, perhaps, in this war that they exercised the cruelties which, about four score years afterward, were revenged by the sons of Clovis. They massacred their hostages as well as their captives. Two hundred young maidens were tortured with exquisite and unrelenting rage; their bodies were torn asunder by wild horses, or their bodies were crushed under the weight of rolling waggons; and their unburied limbs were abandoned on the public roads, as a prey to the dogs and vultures. Such were the savage ancestors whose imaginary virtues have sometimes excited the praise and envy of civilized ages."[1]

To recapitulate: a burning mountain is cast into the sea, and the third of it becomes blood. A burning mountain is a kingdom, which contains within itself the principle of its own destruction; the sea is a various multitude of nations. The third of it becoming blood, denotes a vast loss of life. We have seen, corresponding with these representations, the sea—the outlying nations—driven in upon the European third of the Roman empire, overflowing and converting this third into a sea—that Attila fell with destroying force on this third—that, having marked his course by blood and heaps of smoking ruins, he died, and his mighty empire was no more.

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xxxv.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE THIRD TRUMPET.

The Third Angel sounds—a Great Star falls from Heaven—the Third Part of the Rivers—Fountains, &c.

"AND the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; and the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died in the waters because they were made bitter."

The fall of a star from heaven, in the language of prophecy, represents the fall of a great kingdom. Thus Isaiah[1] describes the destruction of Babylon, by the fall of Lucifer, or the Day-star. "Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, how hath the oppressor ceased, and the golden city ceased. . . . How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning. . . . For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God."

The star falls upon the third part of the rivers and fountains of waters.[2] "Rivers," says Sir Isaac Newton, "in the prophetic dialect, represent people, and fountains cities; for fountains are the permanent heads of rivers politic."

The drying up of rivers, represent in scripture the demolition of cities, and the desolation of the country to which they belong.

Sennacherib is introduced in Isaiah, saying: "I have digged and drunk water, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the besieged places." This arrogant boast is thus answered: "Hast thou not heard long ago, how I have done it, and of

[1] Isaiah, xiv., 4, 12, &c.

[2] It need scarcely be observed here, that waters, in this prophecy, represent people, or nations. Rev. xvii.

ancient times that I have formed it? Now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps."[1] Here, drying up the rivers of the besieged places is the same as "laying waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps."

The same imagery is found in Ezekiel.[2] "The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste. . . . I am against thee and against her rivers. . . . I will make the land of Egypt desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste."

Wormwood is the symbol of extreme affliction and misery. "He hath filled me with bitterness, He hath made me drunken with wormwood. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall."[3]

The symbolic language, therefore, of the trumpet, represents the fall of a kingdom in some of the three divisions of the earth or Roman world, causing the ruin of cities, the desolation of the land, and a vast amount of human misery.

The star which falls is the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy.

The Ostrogoths, one of the many nations subject to Attila, recovered their independence at his death, and settled in Pannonia. In the year 489, their king, Theodoric, with the consent, and probably, at the suggestion of the emperor, Zeno, marched with his tribe into Italy, to deliver it from the domination of Odoacer and the Heruli. His expedition was successful; and he established the kingdom of the Ostrogoths in Italy, where he reigned, with great glory, till his death in 526.

His daughter, Malesuntha, as the guardian of her son, was entrusted with the regency, and she supported with dignity the renown of the Gothic nation. "She solicited," says Gibbon, "and deserved the friendship of the emperor; and the kingdoms of Europe respected, both in peace and war, the majesty of the Gothic throne." But, her son dying prematurely, she attempted against the laws of the nation and the will of two hundred thousand warriors, to usurp the throne; she was resisted, taken, imprisoned, and put to death.

The Emperor Justinian, who claimed the sovereignty of Italy, now prepared to enforce his claims by the sword. The Gothic

[1] Is. xxxvii. 25. [2] Ezek. xxix. 10, 12. [3] Lam. iii. 15, 20.

kingdom fell in this long and fatal war, and, by its fall, consummated the ruin of Italy, and of the countries south of the Danube

The Ostrogoths had maintained the peace of Italy by closing the passes of the Alps against the restless and warlike barbarians who were established in the Alpine and Trans-Alpine parts of the empire; and they protected the Illyrian provinces by securing the Danube against the torrents of savage hordes, that were perpetually rushing from the north and east to the warm and fertile regions of the south. But, when the war broke out, the barrier of the Danube was neglected, so that the provinces were again exposed to desolating hordes of savages; and the passes of the Alps being left unguarded, Italy was devastated by Franks, Burgundians, and Alemanni; her cities, which had escaped in former wars, or had been since restored, were taken, razed or dismantled, and her population was consumed by famine, disease and the sword.

The ruin of cities or towns, being a distinctive characteristic of the trumpet, it must be proved that this ruin is likewise a characteristic of the Gothic war.

The history of Roman towns, particularly in Italy, is a most important part of the history of the Roman empire. The importance of the Italian cities has been noticed by M. Guizot as follows:—

"First of all," says he, "we must represent to ourselves the nature of the Roman Empire, and how it was formed. Rome was, in its origin, only a municipality, a corporation. The government of Rome was merely the aggregate of the institutions, which were suited to a population confined within the walls of a city; these were municipal institutions, that is their distinctive character. . . This was not the case with Rome only. If we turn our attention to Italy, we find around Rome nothing but towns. That which was then called a people, was nothing but a confederation of towns. The Latin people was a confederation of Latin towns. The Tuscans, the Samnites, the Sabines, the people of Græcia Magna, may be described in the same terms. There was at this time no country, that is to say, the country was wholly unlike that which at present exists; it was cultivated as was necessary, but it was uninhabited. The proprietors of lands were the inhabitants of towns. They went forth to superintend their country properties. When Rome extended

herself, what did she do? Follow history, and you will see that she conquered and founded towns. . . . In the east the extension of Roman dominion does not carry altogether this aspect: the population was otherwise distributed than in the west, it was much less concentred in towns."[1]

If you trace the outlines of the Gothic war, which began A. D. 534, and ended A. D. 554, you will find it a history of towns that were taken and retaken—that during the first 18 years, not one pitched battle was fought in the open field—that every town in Italy was alternately occupied or taken either by the Goths or Romans—and that Totila, the Gothic king, in order to bring the war to a speedy termination, demolished the fortifications of the cities.

In the year 536, Belisarius surprised Naples. He spared the city and the lives of the inhabitants; but his troops, many of whom were Huns and distinguished for their cruelty, were allowed to plunder it. Having fortified Naples and Cumæ, he advanced to Rome, which the Goths evacuated on his approach.

Rome was besieged in 537, by the Goths, with an army of one hundred and fifty thousand men, and successfully defended by Belisarius. The sufferings of its inhabitants were very great, but they were light in comparison with their subsequent miseries.

"Anxious to relieve himself from the useless and devouring multitude, Belisarius issued his peremptory orders for the instant departure of the women, the children, and the slaves. . . . His foresight was justified by the increase of the public distress, as soon as the Goths had occupied two important positions in the neighbourhood of Rome. . . In the last months of the siege, the people were exposed to the miseries of scarcity, unwholesome food, and contagious disorders. . . . The whole nation of the Ostrogoths assembled for the attack, and was almost entirely consumed in the siege of Rome. If any credit be due to an intelligent spectator, one third, at least, of their enormous host was destroyed in frequent and bloody combats, under the walls of the city."[2]

The towns of Italy were almost all recovered by the Romans.

[1] Guizot, Lect. 1, p. 28. [2] Decline and Fall, xli.

Amongst those which they besieged, Urbino, Ravenna, Fæsulæ, Orvietto, Auximum are mentioned.

In the year 538, Milan, which had revolted to the Romans, was besieged and taken by the Goths and Burgundians. It was reduced by famine, and no capitulation could be obtained except for the safe retreat of the Roman garrison. "Three hundred thousand males," Gibbon says, "were reported to be slain; the female sex and the more precious spoils were resigned to the Burgundians; the houses, or, at least, the walls of Milan, were levelled with the ground. The Goths, in their last moment, were revenged by the destruction of a city second only to Rome in the size and opulence, in the splendour of its buildings, and the number of its inhabitants."

In the following year, the Franks, encouraged and invited by the Goths, invaded Italy.

"The fertile, though desert, provinces of Liguria and Æmilia were abandoned," Gibbon writes, "to a licentious host of barbarians, whose rage was not mitigated by any thought of settlement or of conquest. Among the cities which they ruined, Genoa, not yet constructed of marble, is particularly enumerated; and the death of thousands, according to the regular practice of war, appears to have excited less horror than some idolatrous sacrifices of women and children, which were performed in the camp of the most Christian king. If it were not a melancholy truth that the first and most cruel sufferings may be the lot of the innocent and helpless, history might exult in the misery of the conquerors, who, in the midst of riches, were left destitute of bread or wine, reduced to drink the waters of the Po, and to feed on the flesh of distempered cattle, the dysentery swept away one third of their army."

In 539, Ravenna was taken by the Romans; the Gothic war was then supposed to be ended; and Belisarius was recalled.

"The Goths," says Gibbon, "had lost their king, (an inconsiderable loss), their capital, their treasures, their provinces from Sicily to the Alps, and a military force of two hundred thousand barbarians, magnificently equipped with horses and arms. Yet all was not lost, as long as Pavia was defended by one thousand Goths. From the thousand warriors of Pavia, a new

people, under the same appellation of Goths, was formed in the camp of Totila."

The war was renewed in 540.

"Twenty thousand Romans encountered the forces of Totila, near Faenza, and on the hills of Mugello of the Florentine territory. On the first attack they abandoned their ensigns, threw down their arms, and dispersed on all sides with an active speed, which abated the loss, whilst it aggravated the shame of defeat. The king of the Goths, who blushed for the baseness of his enemies, pursued with rapid steps the path of honor and victory. Totila passed the Po, traversed the Apennine, suspended the important conquest of Ravenna, Florence and Rome, and marched through the heart of Italy, to form the siege, or rather blockade, of Naples. . After the reduction of Naples and Cumæ, the provinces of Lucania, Apulia, and Calabria, submitted to the king of the Goths. . . The strong towns he successively attacked; and as soon as they had yielded, he *demolished the fortifications;* to save the people from the calamities of a future siege, and to decide the tedious quarrel of the two nations by an equal and honorable conflict in the field of battle."[1] . . . "After reducing by force or treaty the towns of inferior note in the midland provinces of Italy, Totila proceeded, not to assault, but to encompass and starve the ancient capital. Rome was afflicted by the avarice and guarded by the valour of Bessas, a veteran chief of Gothic extraction."

The sufferings and miseries of the inhabitants soon became intolerable.

"The medimnus, or fifth part of the quarter of wheat, was exchanged for seven[2] pieces of gold: fifty pieces were given for an ox, a rare and accidental prize; the progress of famine enhanced this exorbitant value. . A tasteless and unwholesome mixture, in which the bran thrice exceeded the quantity of flour, appeased the hunger of the poor; they were gradually reduced to feed on dead horses, dogs, cats, and mice, and eagerly to snatch the grass, and even the nettles which grew among the ruins of the city. . . A crowd of spectres, pale and emaciated, their bodies oppressed with disease, and their minds with despair, surrounded the palace of the governor, urged with unavailing truth, that it was the duty of a master to maintain his slaves, and humbly requested that he would provide for their subsistence, permit their flight, or command their imme-

[1] Gibbon, c. xliii. [2] Each piece of gold was equal to eleven shillings sterling.

diate execution. Bessas replied with unfeeling tranquillity, that it was impossible to feed, unsafe to dismiss, and unlawful to kill the subjects of the emperor. . . . To the rich and pusillanimous, Bessas sold the permission of departure; but the greatest part of the fugitives expired on the public highways, or were intercepted by the flying parties of the barbarians."

Rome was taken in December, 546. The lives of the inhabitants were spared; but the Gothic troops "were rewarded by the freedom of pillage, after the most precious spoils had been reserved for the royal treasury."

"In this revolution the sons and daughters of Roman consuls tasted the misery which they had spurned or relieved, wandered in tattered garments through the streets of the city, and begged their bread, perhaps without success, before the gates of their hereditary mansions. . . . Against the cities which had so long delayed the course of his victories, Totila appeared inexorable. . . . And the world was astonished by the fatal decree that Rome should be changed into a pasture for cattle. The firm and temperate remonstrance of Belisarius suspended the execution. . . . When Totila had signified to the ambassadors of Belisarius his intention of sparing the city, he stationed an army at the distance of one hundred and twenty furlongs to observe the motions of the Roman general. With the remainder of his forces he marched into Lucania and Apulia, and occupied, on the summit of Mount Gorganus, one of the camps of Hannibal. The senators were dragged in his train, and afterward confined in the fortresses of Campania: the citizens, with their wives and children, were dispersed in exile; and, during forty days, Rome was abandoned to desolate and dreary solitude."[1]

Rome was again recovered by Belisarius in February, 547; retaken in 549 by the Goths, who reduced Rhegium, Tarentum, &c. Totila was defeated and slain in a great battle in 552, by Narses, the Roman general; and the war, A.D. 554, was brought to a conclusion by the total ruin of the Ostrogoths.

But before its termination seventy-five thousand Franks and Alemanni, excited, most probably, by the Goths, descended in the autumn of the year 553, from the Rhætian Alps into the plain of Milan.

[1] Gibbon, c. xliii.

"The conqueror of Italy, Narses, opened a free passage to the irresistible torrent of barbarians. . . . . On the confines of Samnium the two brothers divided their forces. With the right wing Buccelin assumed the spoil of Campania, Lucania, and Bruttium; with the left Lothaire accepted the plunder of Apulia and Calabria. They followed the coast of the Mediterranean and the Hadriatic, as far as Rhegium and Otranto, and the extreme lands of Italy were the term of their destructive progress. The Franks, who were Christians and Catholics, contented themselves with simple pillage and occasional murder; but the churches, which their piety had spared, were stripped by the sacrilegious hands of the Alemanni, who sacrificed horses' heads to their native deities of the woods. They melted or profaned the consecrated vessels, and the ruin of shrines and altars was stained with the blood of the faithful."[1]

A part of this destroying host perished by diseases, and Narses defeated the remainder the following year at Casilinum.

"Seven thousand Goths, the relics of the war, defended the fortress of Campsa till the ensuing spring, and every messenger of Narses announced the reduction of the Italian cities whose names were corrupted by the ignorance or vanity of the Greeks. After the battle of Casilinum Narses entered the capital. The arms and treasures of the Goths, the Franks, and the Alemanni were displayed. His soldiers, with garlands in their hands, chanted the praises of the conqueror; and Rome, for the last time, beheld the semblance of a triumph. . . . . The twenty years of the Gothic war had consummated the distress and depopulation of Italy. As early as the fourth campaign, under the discipline of Belisarius himself, fifty thousand labourers died of hunger in the narrow region of Picenum, and a strict interpretation of the evidence of Procopius would swell the loss of Italy above the total sum of her present inhabitants—perhaps fifteen or sixteen millions."[2]

In this long war of twenty years, which was attended with such a frightful sacrifice of human life, there was no pitched battle during the first eighteen years. It was a war against cities, and every city in Italy was besieged, taken, retaken, razed, or, by the demolition of its fortifications, left naked to the invader: and the wretched Italian soon found that he had not yet drained his cup of bitterness to the dregs.

[1] Gibbon, c. xliii.

[2] Ib. vol. v., c. xliii., pp. 310, 320.

Narses had been insulted by the court of Byzantium. In order to revenge himself, he invited the Lombards to evacuate Pannonia and invade Italy. They had served under him in the Ostrogothic war with distinguished bravery and ferocity. They reduced the villages to ashes, "ravaged," Gibbon says, "the matrons and the virgins on the altars, and their retreat was watched by a strong detachment of regular forces, to prevent a repetition of like disorders."

Alboin, at the head of these savages, invaded Italy in the year 568. "Terror," says the historian, "preceded his march; he found every where, or he left a dreary wilderness. From the Trentine hills to the gates of Ravenna and Rome, the inland regions of Italy, became, without a battle or siege, the lasting patrimony of the Lombards."[1]

We may now proceed to review the effect produced on the other European provinces of the empire by the fall of the kingdom of the Ostrogoths.

"Even the Gothic victories of Belisarius," says Gibbon, "were prejudicial to the state, since they abolished the important barrier of the Upper Danube, which had been so faithfully guarded by Theodoric and his daughter. For the defence of Italy the Goths evacuated Pannonia and Noricum, which they left in a peaceful and flourishing condition; the sovereignty was claimed by the Emperor of the Romans. The actual possession was abandoned to the first invader. On the opposite banks of the Danube, the plains of Upper Hungary, and the Transylvanian hills, were possessed, since the death of Attila, by the tribes of Gepidæ, who respected the Gothic arms, and despised, not indeed the gold of the Romans, but the secret motives of their annual subsidies. The vacant fortifications of the river were instantly seized by these barbarians. Their standards were planted on the walls of Sirmium and Belgrade."[2]

The Gepidæ were now masters of the passes of the Danube, which they sold to the Bulgarians and Sclavonians. Gibbon thus describes them:

"The wild people who dwelt or wandered in the plains of Russia, Lithuania, and Poland, might be reduced, under the two great families

[1] Decline and Fall, vol. v., c. xlv., p. 423, &c. [2] Ib. c. xlii.

of the Bulgarians and the Sclavonians. According to the Greek writers, the former, who touched the Euxine and the Lake of Mæotis, derived from the Huns their name or descent, and it is needless to renew the simple and well-known picture of Tartar manners. They were bold and dexterous archers, who drank the milk and feasted on the flesh of their fleet and indefatigable horses; whose flocks and herds followed, or rather guided, the motions of their roving camps; to whose inroads no country was remote or impervious, and who were practised in flight, though incapable of fear. . . . . The Sclavonians fought on foot, almost naked, and, except an unwieldy shield, without any defensive armour. Their weapons of offence were a bow, a quiver of small poisoned arrows, and a long rope, which they dexterously threw from a distance, and entangled their enemy on a running noose. In the field the Sclavonian infantry was dangerous by their speed, agility, and hardiness. They swam, they dived, they remained under water, drawing their breath through a hollow cane; and a river or lake was often the scene of their unsuspected ambuscade. . . . . The light armed Sclavonians, from a hundred tribes, pursued with almost equal speed the footsteps of the Bulgarian horse. The payment of one piece of gold for each soldier procured a safe and easy retreat through the country of the Gepidæ, who commanded the passage of the Upper Danube. . . . . The same year (539), and possibly in the same month, in which Ravenna surrendered to Belisarius, was marked by an invasion of the Huns or Bulgarians, so dreadful that it almost effaced the memory of their past inroads. They spread from the suburbs of Constantinople to the Ionian Gulph, destroyed thirty-two cities or castles, erased Potidæa, which Athens had built and Philip had besieged, and repassed the Danube, dragging at their horses' heels one hundred and twenty thousand of the subjects of Justinian. In a subsequent inroad they pierced the wall of the Thracian Chersonesus, extirpated the habitations and the inhabitants, boldly traversed the Hellespont, and returned to their companions laden with the spoils of Asia. Another party, which seemed a multitude in the eyes of the Romans, penetrated, without opposition, from the Straits of Thermopylæ to the Isthmus of Corinth; and the last ruin of Greece has appeared an object too minute for the attention of history. . . . Three thousand Sclavonians passed the Danube and the Hebrus, vanquished the Roman generals who dared to oppose their progress, and plundered with impunity the cities of Illyricum and Thrace, each of which had arms and numbers to overwhelm their contemptible assailants. . . . . In the siege of Topirus, whose obstinate defence had enraged the Sclavonians, they massacred fifteen thousand of the males.

. . . . Procopius has confidently affirmed, that in the reign of thirty-two years each *annual* inroad of the barbarians consumed two hundred thousand of the inhabitants of the Roman empire."[1]

"By the departure of the Lombards and the ruin of the Gepidæ (by the Lombards)," says Gibbon, "the balance of power was destroyed on the Danube; and the Avars spread their permanent dominion from the foot of the Alps to the sea coast of the Euxine. . . . . From Belgrade to the walls of Constantinople a line may be measured of six hundred miles; that line was marked with flame and with blood. The horses of the Avars were alternately bathed in the Euxine and the Adriatic; and the Roman pontiff,[2] alarmed by the approach of a more savage enemy was reduced to cherish the Lombards as the protectors of Italy."[3]

To recapitulate: A star falls from heaven—a third part of the fountains and rivers are made bitter, so that men die. The fall of a star, it has been shown, is the fall of a great kingdom. Fountains and rivers are the cities and inhabitants of a country. Imbittering, or injuring the symbolic waters, so that men die, represents the ruin of cities and the desolation of a country. And the third is a division of the Roman empire. Corresponding with these symbols, thus interpreted by scripture and ancient usage, we have seen in the sequence of history and the chronological order of the Apocalypse, that the kingdom of the Ostrogoths fell—that Italy was *thereby* depopulated, and her defenced cities made ruinous heaps—that the other European provinces of the empire were devastated, her cities sacked, and the inhabitants massacred or dragged into a distant captivity by savage hordes, who knew neither fear, nor mercy, nor pity.

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xlii.

[2] The Roman pontiffs, who were silently rising to power, had no rest till they effected the ruin of the Ostrogoths.

[3] Decline and Fall, c. xlvi, p. 475-477.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE FOURTH TRUMPET.

The Fourth Angel sounded—the Third Part of the Sun, and the Third Part of the Moon, and the Third Part of the Stars are smitten.

"AND the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for the third part of it, and the night likewise."

The heavenly luminaries, the sun, the moon and the stars, represent, in the symbolical language of prophecy, kings, nobles, and magistrates, or the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of a state; and the eclipse of the sun and moon, and the falling of the stars, the convulsion of a state and destruction of a system. Thus, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, the subversion of the Jewish state, in its civil and ecclesiastical institutions, (the Jewish religion being then totally perverted,) is foretold by the sun being turned into darkness and the moon into blood. Now, as the sun and stars, when the sun is not the Lord, signify kings and nobles, or the civil power, the moon is the symbol of a corrupt religion. And we have already seen, in the exposition of the sixth seal, that the moon represented such a system; or, at least, that the sun, the moon, and the stars, signified princes, nobles, and the religious institutions of the state. Hence it would appear, that religion, in a corrupted form, is a subject of the prophecy, and that it, as well as the civil authorities of the state, are threatened and are in danger of extinction.

As in this vision, the heavens are not rolled together, and only a third of the sun, and of the moon, and of the stars is darkened, which are not moved out of their places, but remain fixed, the symbols denote partial calamities, not the total destruction of an

empire or system.[1] But, on the other hand, the darkness being excessive, neither day nor night appearing, the disasters, portended, are of such magnitude as to threaten utter ruin, and to take away all hope.

The theatre of the predicted events is the provinces of the old Roman empire, as its boundaries were fixed by Augustus Cæsar, and as a third denotes Europe, Asia, or Africa, one of these divisions is the especial scene of these calamities.

At the time of this vision (which must be the sixth or seventh century,) the Christian religion was excessively depraved by the introduction of pagan rites and superstitions, which even then prevailed to such an extent, that the worship of the dead, and their supposed intercession, had almost entirely superseded the worship of the Almighty and the Mediation of the Redeemer.

This was the state of religion, especially in Asia, when Chosroes, in the seventh century, made his dreadful irruption, endeavoured to extend the Persian empire to its old limits, to extinguish Christianity, and establish on its ruins the religion of Zoroaster. It is in these events that the prophecy will be found to have its accomplishment.

In the reign of Heraclius, Chosroes, king of Persia, formed an alliance with Baian, the formidable Chagan, or princes of the Avars, invaded the eastern provinces of the empire, besieged Constantinople, and reduced the emperor and his court to such despair, that he was on the point of abandoning his capital and giving up the whole of the east to the Persian domination. His ships were in the harbour, his treasures were embarked, and he was deterred from following them, only by the energy and resolution of the archbishop of Constantinople.

The following brief account of this dreadful irruption is taken from Gibbon, Decline and Fall, c. xlvi.

"Under the reign of Phocas, (603-610) the fortifications of Medin, Dara, Amida, and Edessa were successively besieged, reduced and destroyed by the Persian monarch (Chosroes); he passed the Euphrates (A. D. 611), occupied the Syrian cities, Hierapolis, Chalcis, and Berrhæa

[1] "The darkening," says Sir Isaac Newton, "the smiting, the sun, moon, and stars are put for the setting of kingdoms and the desolations thereof, proportional to the darkness."

or Aleppo, and encompassed the walls of Antioch with his irresistible arms. . . . The first intelligence which Heraclius received from the east, was that of the loss of Antioch. . . . The Persians were equally successful and more fortunate in the sack of Cæsarea, the capital of Cappadocia. . . . The pleasant vale of Damascus has been adorned in every age with a royal city: her obscure felicity has hitherto escaped the historian of the Roman empire: but Chosroes reposed his troops in the paradise of Damascus before he ascended the hills of Libanus, or invaded the cities of the Phenician coast. . . . After the reduction of Galilee, and the region beyond Jordan, whose resistance appears to have delayed the fate of the capital, Jerusalem itself was taken by assault. . . . Egypt itself, the only province which had been exempt, since the time of Diocletian, from foreign and domestic war, was again subdued by the successor of Cyrus. Pelusium, the key of that impervious country, was surprised by the cavalry of the Persians. They passed with impunity, the innumerable channels of the Delta, and explored the long valley of the Nile, from the pyramids of Memphis to the confines of Æthiopia. Alexandria might have been relieved by a naval force, but the archbishop and the prefect embarked for Cyprus; and Chosroes entered the second city of the empire, which still preserved a wealthy remnant of industry and commerce. His western trophy was erected, not on the walls of Carthage, but in the neighbourhood of Tripoli; the great colony of Cyrene was finally extirpated. . . . In the first campaign, another army advanced from the Euphrates to the Thracian Bosphorus; Chalcedon surrendered after a long siege, and the Persian camp was maintained above ten years in the presence of Constantinople. The sea coast of Pontus, the city of Ancyra, and the Isle of Rhodes are enumerated among the last conquests of the great king. . . . From the long-disputed banks of the Tigris and the Euphrates, the reign of the grandson of Nurshivan was suddenly extended to the Hellespont and the Nile, the ancient limits of the Persian monarchy.

"Syria, Egypt, and the provinces of Asia were subdued by the Persian arms, while Europe, from the confines of Istria to the long wall of Thrace, was oppressed by the Avars. . . . By these implacable enemies Heraclius was insulted and besieged; and the Roman emperor was reduced to the walls of Constantinople with the remnant of Greece, Italy, and Africa, and some maritime cities from Tyre to Trezibond, of the Asiatic coast. After the loss of Egypt, the capital was afflicted by famine and pestilence; and the emperor, incapable of resistance, and hopeless of relief, had resolved to transfer his person and government to the more secure residence of Carthage. His ships were already laden

with the treasure of his palace, but his flight was arrested by the patriarch, who armed the powers of religion in the defence of his country, and led Heraclius to the altar of St. Sophia, and extorted a solemn oath, that he would live and die with the prople whom God had entrusted to his care."

Heraclius now endeavoured to obtain peace from Chosroes; who replied, "I will never give peace to the emperor of Rome, till he has abjured his crucified God, and embraced the worship of the sun." As these terms could not be accepted, Heraclius determined to carry the war into the heart of Persia.

"Since the days of Scipio and Hannibal," says Gibbon, "no bolder enterprise has been attempted than that which Heraclius achieved for the deliverance of the empire. He permitted the Persians to oppress for a while the provinces, and to insult with impunity the capital of the east; while the Roman emperor explored his perilous way through the Black Sea and the mountains of Armenia, penetrated into the heart of Persia, and recalled the armies of the great king to the defence of his bleeding country. With a select band of five thousand warriors Heraclius sailed from Constantinople."

The Persians were defeated in a succession of battles, and peace was made with the Avars. Chosroes was obliged to return to the defence of his own dominions; his subjects, oppressed by a long and unsuccessful war, revolted, and deposed him: one of his sons was raised to the throne; eighteen of them were slain before his eyes; and he was himself cast into prison, where he died in five days.

This dreadful war completely exhausted the strength of the Roman and Persian monarchies, and prepared the way for the events of the next vision—the opening of the pit and the irruption of the locusts.

In the seventh chapter, a symbolical tempest is ready to burst forth on the four corners of the earth. The winds, we have seen, represent invasions; the earth, the Roman empire; and the sea, the barbaric world, which lay beyond and encompassed it. Now, if history be carefully examined, it will be found that there was scarcely a spot of these vast dominions, from the mouths of the Danube and of the Rhine to Libya, from the Atlantic Ocean to the Euphrates, over which the waves of this

raging sea had not passed. The Goths, Scythians and Germans devastated Europe; the Vandals, instigated by Boniface, the Roman governor, invaded, and, assisted by the Moors, desolated Africa; and, in this last irruption, Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt were wasted by the Persians and Arabs: so that there was not a province, not a mountain that had been trodden by the foot of man, nor a valley, however sequestered, perhaps not a town or city of the empire, (except Constantinople) from Rome to the most petty village, which had not been traversed and occupied by the invaders.[1]

The effects of the Persian war are thus stated by Gibbon:

"The glory of the house of Sassan ended with the life of Chosroes. His unnatural son enjoyed only eight months the fruit of his crimes; and in the space of four years the regal title was assumed by nine candidates, who disputed with the sword or dagger the fragments of an exhausted monarchy. Every province, and each city of Persia, was the scene of independence, of discord, and of blood, and the state of anarchy prevailed about eight years, till the factions were silenced and united under the common yoke of the Arabian caliphs."

As regards the Romans he says:—

"The loss of two hundred thousand soldiers which had fallen by the sword, was of less fatal importance than the decay of arts, of agriculture,

[1] These invasions are represented in the Apocalypse by an inundation or a deluge. Poets and historians have the same imagery. Thus, Milton, Paradise Lost, b. i.

> "A multitude, like which the populous north
> Poured never from her frozen loins, to pass
> Rhene or the Danau, when her barbarous sons
> Came like a deluge on the south, and spread
> Beneath Gibraltar to the Libyan sands."

And so Gibbon frequently. For example: "Carthage, Cirta, and Hippo Regius, were the only cities that appeared to rise above the general inundation."—Decline and Fall, c. xxxi.

And Schlegel, lecture xi. on History, in describing the migrations of the barbaric hordes, says, "Doth not the earth, I say, teeming, as it doth, with fertility and life, rest on the gigantic remains of a primitive world, submerged by the old floods. . . . . Well, the migration of the northern nations was a new Ogygean inundation of nations in the historical ages. . . . A vast influx and reflux of nations, rolling in incessant waves from the east to the west and to the north."

and of population, in this long and destructive war: and although a victorious army had been formed under the standard of Heraclius, the unnatural effort appears to have exhausted rather than exercised their strength. While the emperor triumphed at Constantinople, or Jerusalem, an obscure town on the confines of Syria was pillaged by the Saracens, and they cut in pieces some troops who advanced to its relief: an ordinary and trifling occurrence, had it not been the prelude of a mighty revolution. These robbers were the apostles of Mahomet; their fanatic valour had emerged from the desert, and, in the last eight years of his reign, Heraclius lost to the Arabs the same provinces which he had rescued from the Persians."

END OF THE FIRST PART.

NOTES.

NOTE A, PAGE 10.

THAT prophecy must be interpreted by history, unless an inspired interpreter be sent to explain it, appears to be declared by St. Peter, ii. E. c. i. 20: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." But as the meaning of the text is disputed, I have not introduced it into the body of the work.

Some propose to translate, "No prophecy of the scripture is of private invention;" that is, as they explain, no prophecy is invented by the prophet. But this translation cannot, I think, be allowed; because, as Macknight, who adopts and defends it, acknowledges the Greek word epilusis signifies no where else invention.

In the Lexicons of Schleusner, Wahl, and Parkhurst, it signifies interpretation.

It does not occur, I believe, in any other part of the Bible; but the verb from which it is derived, epiluein, to unloose, to solve, to expound, is found in St. Mark's Gospel: "And without a parable spake He not unto them; and when they were alone he expounded all things to his disciples."—iv. 34.

There appears to be another objection to this new translation. It makes the apostle assert the same thing twice, and the second proposition to be the reason of the first.

Let invention be the rendering, and the passage is as follows: No prophecy of the scripture is of private (that is, as they explain, of the prophet's) invention. For the prophecy came not in the old time, by the will of man or the prophet. Invention implies deliberation, choice, the exercise of the will; when, therefore, it is asserted that prophecy is not of the prophet's invention, it is surely declared that it did not come by the will of the prophet.

I have no doubt the explanation of the passage turns on the meaning of idios, translated private.

The Greek word idios denotes the peculiar appropriation of the thing with which it is joined, to something previously mentioned or understood. It usually signifies his own, our own, your own, their own, as "their own righteousness," "his own blood," "a prophet of their own," "your own stedfastness." Now, as St. Peter is directly addressing the Christians, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well to take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place," the passage may be translated, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of your own interpretation." The Greek construction is the same as in iii. 17, which is thus rendered in our version, "Ye, therefore, beloved, seeing that ye know (knowing) these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness."

Further, idios, which denotes what peculiarly belongs to oneself, or the party spoken of, is opposed to allotrios, another's, or belonging to another; so that allotrios may be, and is substituted for, ouk idios, or idios with the negative. "Thy seed," God says to Abraham, "shall dwell in a land not theirs."—Gen. xv. 13. In the septuagint "not theirs" is ouk idia. In the Acts of the Apostles, vii. 6, where this passage is quoted, allotria is substituted for ouk idia.

St. Peter elsewhere has used the word idios in a like sense: "Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own (idia) power or holiness we had made this man to walk."—Acts, iii. 12. A miracle had been wrought, which filled the Jews with wonder and amazement. Now, when St. Peter denies that it was wrought by the power or holiness of himself and of St. John, he surely asserts that it was wrought by another, and, as the context shows, by the Lord.

When, therefore, St. Peter says that "no prophecy of the scripture is of private[1] (or of our own) interpretation," he affirms that its interpretation is of another, who must be God; for only two parties are mentioned, man and God. When, therefore, it is denied to be of man, it is given to God.

But God interprets prophecy one of two ways; either, as in the case of Pharaoh's dreams and of the prophecies recorded in Daniel, by sending

[1] It may be observed, that about the time of the translation of the Bible, "private" was used by the best writers in the sense of own. "This persuasion ought (we say) to be fully settled in their hearts, that in litigious and controversed causes of such quality, the will of God is to have them to do whatsoever the sentence of judicial and final decision shall determine. Yea, though it seem in their *private* opinion to swerve utterly from that which is right."—Hooker. Preface Eccl. Polity, s. 6.

an inspired interpreter, or by bringing the events to pass which accomplish, and thereby elucidate and explain the predictions. This is His ordinary method, and it is, doubtless, that which is alluded to here.

The meaning of the text, as thus understood, is easy, and consistent with the apostle's argument.

The Christians were suffering cruel persecutions when St. Peter wrote his Epistles, to comfort and encourage them to patient endurance. One main topic of encouragement is the power and coming of the Lord, to take vengeance on His enemies, and to deliver those who trust in and obey Him. His power and coming are evidently the subject of this part of the epistle. "We have not," says he, "followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."—v. 16. He then proceeds to adduce two proofs of His power and coming. The first is the voice which was uttered from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," when he and two other apostles were eye-witnesses of the transfiguration on the mount. Inasmuch as He has been thus proved to be the Son of God, and to be glorified, it is a sure, though presumptive, proof, of His power and coming.

He then proceeds to the second proof, which he calls more sure,[1] or irrefragable. We have a more sure word of prophecy, or rather (as the Greek construction requires, and as excellent Greek scholars have translated) "We have a more sure word, the prophetic; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts."

As the subject here is the power and coming of the Lord, the prophecies referred to must be those which foretell, and have their accomplishment in the manifestation of, His power and coming. This is a more sure or a more irrefragable proof of His power and coming than even the voice[2] from heaven on the mount; for as that was heard by three of the apostles only, it is an evidence that depends on their vera-

[1] Firmus, qui non facile labefactari et concuti potest.—Schleusner.

[2] "The Apostle tells us, in the 16th verse, that God declared Christ, by a voice from the excellent glory, to be his beloved Son; but this is not the thing he would prove, for he brings this declaration to prove something else; and this declaration is considered as one of the proofs to which he compares the word of prophecy."—Bishop Sherlock, Discourse I. on Prophecy. The mind seems to be more easily led, in the original Greek, to a perception of the things compared, than in the English version. The same Greek verb, in some of it's forms, is repeated three times, and must be understood, verse 19, at prophecy. It is translated twice "came," (17, 21) and once "moved:" "Holy men, as they were moved."

city; and, besides, it affords no more than an inferential proof. But as the object of the prophetic word is to attest directly the fact of His power and coming, to destroy His enemies and to save those who trust in Him, every person may, at all times, satisfy his own mind by a direct appeal to it; provided they will do what the apostle admonishes us to do, "take heed" to it, that is, study and meditate it.

But as the prophecies here referred to began to be accomplished after the ascension of the Lord, they were still very obscure (being only just beginning to be fulfilled), and were, therefore, when the epistle was written, a light shining in a dark place, whereunto the afflicted Christians were to take heed until the day dawned, that is, until the prophetic word becomes gradually elucidated, and the day-star (the full conviction of Christ's power and presence) arise in their hearts.

The reason and necessity of this patient attention to prophecy are then stated; "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of private interpretation," that it cannot be understood and developed by the wisdom and sagacity of man; for prophecy did not come by man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

NOTE B, PAGE, 84.

Although Gibbon here says, it is probable that Trajan's conquest of Dacia weakened the empire, yet in another place he regards it as one of his great exploits.

There can be no doubt that the reduction of Dacia to a Roman province was a very grave mistake. What the Romans had to dread, and the piercing intellect of Augustus seems to have perceived, was the attacks of the outlying and barbaric nations. Hence he recommended that the Rhine and the Danube should be the boundaries of the empire on the north; for they formed an excellent barrier, and could be easily guarded. But by extending the empire several (13) hundred miles, as in the case of Dacia, beyond the Danube, the Romans not only deprived themselves of an impassable barrier, but they were compelled to defend, against the barbarians of the north and of the east, nearly the entire arch of an immense circle, instead of its cord. And Aurelian, who was the most warlike of Trajan's successors, found it necessary, as Gibbon has observed, to relinquish Dacia.

But the historian of the Decline and Fall omits no opportunity of extolling Trajan. Hadrian did not attempt to maintain, or rather recover, his eastern conquests, and Gibbon remarks, "It was, however, scarcely in his (Hadrian's) power to place the superiority of his predecessor

in a more conspicuous light than by thus confessing himself unequal to the task of defending the conquests of Trajan."[1]

According to Dion Cassius, Trajan was himself unequal to the task of defending his own conquests. The Greek historian says, "he did nothing worthy of his former exploits, and besides, he lost even all his conquests"[2] (in the east).

NOTE C, PAGE 85.

Gibbon, in a note appended to his account of these times, says, "There had been no example of three successive generations on the throne (of the Roman empire); only three instances of sons who succeeded their fathers. The marriages of the Cæsars, notwithstanding the permission and frequent practice of divorces, were generally unfruitful."[3]

I have cited this remark of the historian, that it may be compared with some facts recorded in another history.

David, on his death-bed, reminded Solomon of the promise which God had made to him: "If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth, with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (saith He) a man on the throne of Israel."[4]

Notwithstanding the idolatry of Solomon, and the frequent lapses of the kings of the house of David, the throne was occupied by David and his descendants for 450 years; the son regularly succeeding the father in lineal succession. And this uninterrupted succession is frequently declared to be continued in consequence of the promise to David, and his strict observance of the law. But in the neighbouring kingdom of Israel, rent from the family of Solomon in consequence of his idolatry, and where idolatry was established for reasons of state,[5] the palace was almost a perpetual scene of domestic treason, and the throne was occupied by nine different families.[6] Besides, although the kingdom, consisting of ten tribes, was vastly more powerful than that of Judah, it

[1] Decline and Fall, c. 1, p. 9.

[2] Εμελλε δ' αρα. . . . . μητε αξιον τι των προκατειργασμενων πραξειν, και προσετι και αυτα εκεινα απολεσειν.—Dion Cassius, B. lxviii. 29.

[3] Decline and Fall, c. vii. p. 208. [4] 1 Kings, ii. 4. [5] Ib. xii. 26, &c.

[6] Jeroboam; 1 Kings, xii; Baasha, xv. 27; Zimri, xvi. 9; Omri, xvi. 17; Jehu, 2 Kings, ix. 14; Shallum, xv. 10; Menahem, ib. 14; Pekah, ib. 25; Hoshea, ib. 30. They "departed not from the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin."

was dissolved long before the latter, and did not subsist more than 250 years.

NOTE D, PAGE 96.

Mr. Gibbon has some ingenious observations to extenuate and even justify this decree of Trajan. Among other things, he says that it "discovers so much regard for justice and humanity as could be reconciled with his mistaken notions of religious policy."[1]

I have no doubt, if Trajan's character be considered, as it really was, the observation is perfectly just. But if Trajan were, as the historian represents him, a man of the most exalted virtue and perfection, it would be singularly at variance with the rest of his conduct, and exhibit the greatest inconsistency. "The senate,"[2] Gibbon says, "in pouring out the customary acclamations on the accession of a new emperor, wished that he might surpass the felicity of Augustus and the virtue of Trajan." He calls him "the father of his country." And again, "If a man," says he, "were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. . . . . In the conduct of those (the Roman) monarchs we may trace the utmost lines of vice and virtue; the most exalted perfection and the meanest degeneracy of our own species. The golden age of Trajan and the Antonines had been preceded by an age of iron."

Let us now consider the character given by other writers of this man, in whose conduct we may trace the utmost lines of virtue, and the most exalted perfection of our own species.

I have not, at present, access to Spartian, Victor, Dion Cassius, and Julian; but Lardner, whose fidelity may be relied on, quotes them (vol. vii. p. 69), and gives the following account of Trajan. It will be seen that his account, in one of its most detestable features, is fully confirmed by Gibbon himself.

"Trajan was fond of the combats of gladiators. Dion says, that after he had triumphed for his first victory over the Dacians, he exhibited in the amphitheatre shows of gladiators, of whom he was very fond, and introduced dancers into the theatre, being enamoured with one of them.

[1] Decline and Fall, c. xvi. [2] Ib. c. iii.

And after the second victory over the Dacians, the same historian, or Xiphilinus from him, says, "there were shows continued for an hundred and three-and-twenty days, in which there were slain eleven thousand beasts, wild and tame: and there were combats of ten thousand gladiators." Ten thousand human beings butchered to make a Roman holiday.[1]

Trajan was worshipped as a god in his lifetime.

"He is said to have indulged himself at some seasons in excess of eating and drinking, and he is charged with a vice not fit to be named."[2]

Gibbon remarks, in a note of the third chapter, p. 91, "that of the first fifteen emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct." This not "entirely correct taste in love" he thus writes of, in the forty-fourth chapter of his work—"I touch with reluctance, and dispatch with impatience, a more odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea." Yet Trajan, who, notoriously, and as the historian of the Decline and Fall admits, practised this "odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea," is represented by him as a man in whose "conduct we may trace the utmost lines of virtue," and "the most exalted perfection of our nature."

It is in these times of fearful depravity and pollution, when the worshippers of the true God were cruelly persecuted, when the vast majority of mankind knew only such gods as Nerva and Trajan, and not only lived in the daily commission of the most tremendous abominations, but had "pleasure in them that do them," that this admired and seductive writer regards as "the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous."

NOTE E, PAGE 102.

Galerius was the chief author of Diocletian persecution. Gibbon thus writes of him and of the Christians who were his subjects: "The

[1] He indulged so freely in wine, that he found it necessary, like Nerva (whom he made a god), to direct that none of his orders, issued after a lengthened feast should be obeyed. "Quin etiam vinolentiam, qui vitio, uti Nerva, agebatur, prudentia molliverat, curari vetans jussa post longiores epulas. Victor de Cæsaribus."—c. xiii.

[2] It appears from the testimony of Dion, of Spartian, and of Julian, that he was most intemperately addicted to this vice, that it had gained the complete mastery of him, and that a regular system of corruption was practised to gratify his abominable lusts.

sanguinary temper of Galerius, the first and principal author of the persecution, was formidable to those Christians, whom their misfortunes had placed within the limits of his dominion. . . . When Galerius had obtained the supreme power and government of the East, he indulged in their fullest extent, his zeal and cruelty, and not only in the provinces of Thrace and Asia, which acknowledged his immediate jurisdiction, but in those of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where Maximin gratified his own inclination, by yielding a rigorous obedience to the stern commands of his benefactor. The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views, the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices."

A few pages afterward, he tells us that the whole number of martyrs who suffered death, during the ten years of the persecution, within the dominions of Galerius and Maximin, "the ruling passions" of whose soul, "were cruelty and superstition," were fifteen hundred; "a number, which if it is equally divided between the ten years of the persecution, will allow an annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs."

Galerius was sanguinary, he was armed with supreme power, and he used the most violent efforts of despotism to extirpate in his own proper dominions of Asia and Thrace, an entire people; and his most violent efforts were seconded in Syria, Palestine and Egypt, by the zeal of a tyrant whose character was, if possible, still more sanguinary than his own. Yet, strange to say, these cruel men, armed with despotic power, and using the most violent efforts of despotism to extirpate an entire people, destroyed, during ten years, in Thrace, Asia, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, only 1500! This is strange, and it is altogether incredible, for the Christians never resisted, and they scarcely ever fled from persecution. If Galerius and Maximin used the most violent efforts of despotism during ten years, to extirpate a whole people, how does it happen that only fifteen hundred, out of many millions,[1] suffered death by

[1] According to Gibbon's account, they were a twentieth of the inhabitants of the empire—five or six millions; by far the greatest number were in the Provinces of Galerius and Maximin. From the way in which Maximin wrote of the Christians, one would suppose they were far more numerous. "They (calamities) have befallen us, because of the pernicious error and empty vanity of these execrable men, (Christians,) which has so spread as to cover the whole earth with shame and dishonour." Rescript of Maximin, cited by Lardner, vol. vii. p. 537. And again: "Our lords and fathers, Diocletian and Maximin, when they saw that almost all mankind were

these most violent efforts? and if only fifteen hundred died, how is it possible these sanguinary tyrants, could have employed, for very many years, the most violent efforts of despotism to extirpate a whole people?

Eusebius, a Christian, and contemporary historian, gives a very different account. According to him, even in the Thebais alone, a vastly greater number must have suffered martyrdom. "Such things were done (to the Christian,) not for a few days, not for a small space of time, but for whole years together; when sometimes more than ten, at other times more than twenty in number were destroyed; at sometimes not less than thirty, at other times almost sixty, and at other times almost an hundred men together, with many little children and women were killed in one day, they having been condemned to various and interchangeable punishments. We, ourselves, also when in that country, have seen many suffer in one day, when some were beheaded, others were consumed by fire," &c.

Gibbon, however, rejects the testimony of Eusebius and other contemporary writers as vague, and condemns them for not ascertaining "the precise number of those persons who were permitted to seal with their blood their belief of the Gospel." It may be worth while to consider briefly his own method of ascertaining numbers, and of diluting even heathen testimony, when it proves too strong for his palate.

According to Tacitus, the Christians at Rome, in the time of Nero, were a vast multitude. Pliny also represents them as being very numerous in Bithynia. Gibbon notes and thus comments on their testimony. "The Christians of Rome at the time of the accidental persecution of Nero, are represented by Tacitus as already amounting to a very great multitude, and the language of that great historian is almost similar to the style employed by Livy, when he relates the introduction and suppression of the rites of Bacchus. After the Bacchanals had awakened the severity of the Senate, it was likewise apprehended that a very great multitude, as it were another people, had been initiated into those abhorred mysteries. A more careful inquiry soon demonstrated, that the offenders did not exceed seven thousand; a number, indeed, sufficiently alarming when considered as the object of public justice. It is with the same candid allowance that we should interpret the vague expression of Tacitus, and in a former instance of Pliny, when they exaggerated the

forsaking the worship of their gods, and going over to the sect of the Christians, did rightly ordain that all men who had forsaken the worship of the immortal gods, should be called back to the worship of the gods by public pains and penalties."—ib v. 40. Here, Maximin says, that the Christian doctrines had spread over the whole empire, and that "almost all mankind were forsaking the worship of the gods."

crowds of deluded fanatics who had forsaken the established worship of their gods."[1]

Any one who reads this account of Gibbon, would suppose that after the Bacchanals had awakened the suspicion of the senate, it was apprehended by the senate and magistrates, that the Bacchanals were "a very great multitude," "as it were another people."

Now, according to Livy, it was Hipsala, a freed woman, who apprehended the Bacchanals, were "a very great multitude," as "it were another people." And this apprehension was expressed secretly to the consul, before the senate had been informed of the secret assemblies of the Bacchanals. This any one may see by turning to Livy, b. xxxix., chap. 13.

Again, as Mr. Gibbon explains Tacitus[2] by Livy, it would naturally be supposed that the expressions are Livy's own; and, therefore, that he has written vaguely and greatly exaggerated, by representing seven thousand to be "a very great multitude," "as it were another people." The words, although found in Livy, express, however, neither his own sentiments, nor the apprehension of the senate and magistrates, but those of Hipsala, the freed woman, who gave information of the conspiracy.

Hipsala, when a little girl, had been initiated, and had been in a Bacchanalian assembly, with her mistress, but for many years, since her manumission, she had not been at the Bacchanalian orgies, nor had she had any intercourse with the Bacchanalians, of whom she knew nothing since that time. The Bacchanalians, it is clear, had managed to conduct their meetings so as to elude, many years, the vigilance of the senate, the consuls, and other magistrates. It is, therefore, impossible Hipsala could have the means of being well informed as to their probable numbers. But she believed or apprehended that they were very numerous, and she represented them, in her private examination before the consul, as "a very great multitude," "as it were another people." Their actual number was found, on investigation, to be not much above 7,000.

Now as the exaggeration is that of Hipsala, a freed woman, who was necessarily very ignorant, and not of Livy, it does not appear fair to represent it as his, and then to explain away the force of Tacitus'[3] multitudo ingens, "very great multitude," by the supposed exaggeration of Livy.

[1] Decline and Falls, c. xv.

[2] The language of Tacitus is, "multitudo ingens." In Livy, "multitudinem ingentem, alterum jam prope populum."

[3] The account Tacitus gives of the great number of Christians, appears to be con-

It is fair, however, on the principles which this eminent writer allows, and even justifies. His object is to sap Christianity, and infuse his own sceptical opinions into the mind of the unwary reader. This is a public not a private matter. In public transactions, he says, falsehood and insincerity discover "only a defect of power." His words are:—"Falsehood and insincerity, unsuitable as they seem to the dignity of public transactions, offend us with a less degrading idea of meanness, than when they are found in the intercourse of private life. In the latter, they discover a want of courage; in the other only a defect of power."—Decline and Fall. vol. I., c. v, p. 141.

He supposes Pliny likewise, as well as Tacitus, to have exaggerated, because Livy, as he says, instead of Hipsala, exaggerated. Pliny made his official report to the emperor, in his double capacity of a judge and a governor. There is no reason why he should exaggerate. Nor have his statements the appearance of exaggeration. There is nothing cloudy or indistinct in them. His language is forcible, and, one would think, well adapted to express things of which he had a clear conception; and he could not possibly be very ignorant of them. "Multi enim omnis ætatis, utriusque sexûs etiam, vocantur in periculum, et vocabuntur. Neque enim civitates tantum, sed vicos etiam et agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est. Quæ videtur sisti et corrigi potest. Certe satis constat, prope etiam desolata templa cepisse celebrari, et sacra solemnia diu intermissa repeti. Passimque vænire victimas, quarum ad huc rarissimus emptor inveniebatur. Ex quo facile est opinari quæ turba hominum emendari possit, si sit pœnitentiæ locus." Which may be thus translated. For many of all ages and of both sexes are accused, and will be accused. Nor has the contagion of this superstition seized the cities only, but the towns also, and the open country. It seems to me that it might be stayed and corrected. It is certain that the temples, which were almost forsaken, are frequented, and that the sacred solemnities which had been long neglected are resumed; and that the victims are everywhere purchased, for which, hitherto, scarcely a purchaser was found. Whence, it is easy to imagine, what a multitude of men might be reclaimed, if pardon were granted on repentance.

firmed by Julian. "He supposeth that there were in many cities of Greece and Italy multitudes of believers in Jesus before John wrote his Gospel; which, as he computes, was published soon after the death of Peter and Paul."—Lardner, vol. vii., p. 629.

SUPPLEMENT TO PAGE 32.

I have assumed the identity of the beasts, c. xvii., xix. It is a point, not disputed by commentators, and it can be easily proved. A beast with seven heads and ten horns is introduced, c. xii., xiii. The article refers us to one of them. The two-horned beast, being the same as the false prophet, is excluded. It is shown, pages 34, 35, that the beast, c. xii., xiii., xvii., is regarded as one, though existing in two different states. But, independent of this, the article and the kings of the earth, c. xix., 19, compared with c. xvii., 8, 11, 18, prove the identity.